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Montezuma Edition

THE WORKS OF WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT

TWENTY-TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

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Montezuma Edition

HISTORY OF THE

Conquest of Mexico

BY

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT

EDITED BY

WILFRED HAROLD MUNRO

PROFESSOR OF EUROPEAN HISTORY IN BROWN UNIVERSITY

AND COMPRISING THE NOTES OF THE EDITION BY
JOHN FOSTER KIRK

"Victrices aquilas alium laturus in orbem"
LUCAN, Pharsalia, lib. v., v. 370

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PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

THE LANDING OF CORTÉS AT VERA CRUZ

Page 365

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VOL. I

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J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY THE EDITOR

WILLIAM HICKLING PRESCOTT was born in Salem, Massachusetts, May 4, 1796. He died in Boston, January 28, 1859. William Prescott, his father, a lawyer of great ability and of sterling worth, was at one time a judge, and was frequently elected to public positions of trust and responsibility. His mother was a daughter of Thomas Hickling, for many years United States Consul at the Azores. His grandfather, William Prescott, was in command of the American forces at the battle of Bunker Hill, June 17, 1775. On both sides, therefore, the future historian was descended from what Oliver Wendell Holmes aptly termed the "New England Brahman Stock." He was prepared for college by an unusually accomplished scholar, John Sylvester John Gardiner, for many years the rector of Trinity Church, Boston, and entered Harvard College as a sophomore in 1811. Three years later he graduated with the Class of 1814.

During his junior year came the accident which was to change the whole course of his life. As he was leaving the dining-hall, in which the students sat at "Commons," a biscuit, thrown by a careless fellow-student, struck him squarely in the left eye and stretched him senseless upon the

floor. Paralysis of the retina was the result; the injury was beyond the reach of the healing art, and the sight of one eye was utterly destroyed. After a period of intense suffering, spent in a darkened room, he recovered sufficiently to resume his college work and to be graduated with his class. For a year and a half the uninjured eye served him fairly well. Then, suddenly, acute rheumatism attacked it, causing, except in occasional periods of intermission, excruciating pain during the rest of his life. Total darkness, for weeks at a time, was not infrequently Prescott's lot, and work, except under a most careful adjustment of every ray of light, was almost out of the question. Under these circumstances the career at the bar which his father had planned for him, and to which he had looked forward with so much pleasure was no longer to be thought of. Business offered no attractions, even if a business life had been possible to him in his semi-blindness. He turned his attention to literature, and found there his vocation.

But for this work he felt that the most careful preparation was necessary. In a letter, written eighteen months before his death, he says, " I proposed to devote ten years of my life to the study of ancient and modern literature, chiefly the latter, and to give ten years more to some historical work. I have had the good fortune to accomplish this design pretty nearly within the limits assigned. In the Christmas of 1837 my first work was given to the public."

During the first ten years of preparation he was

a frequent contributor to the Reviews, writing some of the papers which are printed in the volume of "Miscellanies" which has always formed part of his "works." His historical work was accomplished with the utmost difficulty. American scholarship was not then advanced, and it was almost impossible to secure readers who possessed a knowledge of foreign languages. Pathetically Mr. Prescott tells of the difficulties surmounted. The secretary he employed at first knew no language but his own. "I taught him to pronounce the Castilian in a manner suited, I suspect, much more to my ear than to that of a Spaniard; and we began our wearisome journey through Mariana's noble history. I cannot even now recall to mind without a smile the tedious hours in which, seated under some old trees in my country residence, we pursued our slow and melancholy way over pages which afforded no glimmering of light to him, and from which the light came dimly struggling to me through a half intelligible vocabulary. But in a few weeks the light became stronger, and I was cheered by the consciousness of my own improvement; and when we had toiled our way through seven quartos I found I could understand the book when read about two-thirds as fast as ordinary English." Having thus gathered the ideas of his many authorities from the mechanical lips of his secretary, Mr. Prescott would ponder them for a time, and would then dictate the notes for a chapter of from forty to fifty pages. These notes were read and reread to him while the subject was still fresh in his memory. He ran them

over many times in his mind before he began to dictate the final copy, and was thus able to escape errors into which men with full command of their sight frequently fall. For the last thirty years of his life he made use of a writing instrument for the blind, the noctograph, by which he was able to write his own pages and partially to dispense with dictation. With the noctograph he wrote with great rapidity, but in an almost illegible hand which only the author and his secretary could read.

When, after twenty years of labor, the "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella" was finished, its author was so doubtful respecting its value that he proposed simply to put it upon his library shelf "for the benefit of those who should come after." His father wisely combated this morbid judgment and insisted upon its publication. "The man who writes a book which he is afraid to publish is a coward," he said to his son. The work was given to the world in 1837 and was immediately and immensely successful. Its author, who had hitherto been only an obscure writer of reviews, took his place at once in the first rank of contemporary historians,—to use the words of Daniel Webster,—"like a comet that had blazed out upon the world in full splendor." In a very short space of time translations appeared in Spanish, German, French, and Italian. Critics of many nationalities joined in concurrent praise.

In a way Mr. Prescott's achievement was a national triumph. British reviewers were even

more laudatory than were the American. One of the most striking testimonials came from Richard Ford, the author of the famous "Handbook for Spain,"—an English scholar whose knowledge of things Spanish was phenomenal. Mr. Ford wrote, "Mr. Prescott's is by far the first historical work which British America has yet produced, and one that need hardly fear a comparison with any that has issued from the European press since this century began." Mr. Ford was not enthusiastic over American institutions and was by no means prepared to believe that the American experiment in democratic government was likely to result in a permanent State. It was with an eye to posterity, therefore, that he cautiously and vaguely assigned Mr. Prescott not to the United States, but to British America. The commendatory notices that appeared in British publications showed that many men besides Mr. Ford were astounded that "British America" could produce such an excellent specimen of historical workmanship. Sydney Smith's praise was most enthusiastic. He even went so far as to promise the American author a "Caspian Sea of Soup" if he would visit England.

The new historian was not spoiled by the adulation showered upon him. Rejoicing in the unexpected praise, he devoted himself with renewed zeal, and with even greater care, to the composition of another work. This, "The History of the Conquest of Mexico," appeared in 1843, and in less than twelve months seven thousand copies of it had been sold in the United States. The art of

advertising, in which the publishers of to-day are so proficient, had not then been developed; the "Conquest of Mexico" made its own way among the reading public. For the English copyright Bentley, the London publisher, paid £650. Ten editions were published in England in sixteen years, and twenty-three were issued in the United States. Popular approval was even more pronounced than in the case of the "Ferdinand and Isabella," and the applause of the reviewers was also much more loud. The pure and sound English appealed especially to scholars like Milman. That famous historian placed Prescott "in the midst of the small community of really good English writers of history in modern times." Coming from the editor of the best edition of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," this was praise indeed. The *Edinburgh Review* said, "Every reader of intelligence forgets the beauty of his coloring in the grandeur of his outline. . . . Nothing but a connected sketch of the latter can do justice to the highest charm of the work." Stirling, author of the "Cloister Life of the Emperor Charles the Fifth," wrote, "The account of the Triste Noche, the woeful night in which, after the death of Montezuma, Cortés and his band retreated across the lake and over the broken causeway, cutting their way through a nation in arms, is one of the finest pictures of modern historical painting." The Spanish Royal Academy of History had elected Prescott to membership in that august body soon after his "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isa-

bella" appeared; other historical societies and learned bodies now heaped honors upon him.

The historian kept steadily at work. The task to which he had devoted himself was to tell the tale of Spanish greatness when the fortunes of Spain were at their highest point. The "History of the Conquest of Peru" was published in 1847, four years after the appearance of the "Mexico." It reads like a romance and has always been the most popular of Prescott's works. To-day it is the only history of the early Spanish achievements in Peru which is regarded as an "authority" on the South American republic, and is always kept in stock in Peruvian bookstores. For the English copyright of this work Bentley paid £800. Seventeen thousand copies were sold in thirteen years. The demand for it is constant.

The author's fame was now fully established. He was everywhere regarded as one of the greatest of living historians, and honors and wealth flowed steadily towards him. His income from his books was very large. Stirling estimates it at from £4000 to £5000 per annum. This, in addition to the fortune he had inherited, made Mr. Prescott a very wealthy man in the years when the enormous incomes of to-day were hardly dreamed of. He was as methodical and careful in pecuniary affairs as in his literary work. A most accurate account was kept of his receipts and expenditures, and one-tenth of his income was always devoted to charity.

In 1850 he made a short visit to Europe, spending some time upon the Continent but more in

England and Scotland. Everywhere he was lionized in a way that would have turned the heads of most men. The University of Oxford made him a D.C.L. The doors of the houses where learning was honored opened at his approach. His own charming personality was, however, one of the greatest factors in his social success. As a man he was most lovable.

Upon his return to America he devoted himself to writing the "History of the Reign of Philip the Second," for which task he had accumulated an extensive collection of documentary "authorities." This work was to appear in six volumes, and for it the author was offered £1000 a volume by two publishers. Two volumes were published in 1855 and a third appeared three years later. Macaulay pronounced "Philip the Second" Mr. Prescott's best work. Its style is more finished, its use of authorities more masterly than in the previous volumes. For dramatic interest the chapters describing the defence of Malta by the Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem are quite equal to the account of the "Triste Noche," of Cortés and his companions in Mexico, which so excited the admiration of Stirling. But the work was never to be completed. After two volumes had appeared, there was published "Prescott's Edition of Robertson's Charles the Fifth." This was simply a new edition of the Scottish historian's work, with additions dealing with the later years of the Emperor's life which Robertson had not treated. In it is given the true story of the emperor's retirement and death. Mr.

Prescott had for Robertson a very great admiration. He always acknowledged his deep obligation to him, and he felt that it would be most unnecessary, and in fact almost presumptuous, for him to attempt to re-write a history which the Scottsman had written so well. In these three works, "Ferdinand and Isabella," "Charles the Fifth," and "Philip the Second," a century and a half of the most important part of Spanish history is presented. That Prescott did not live to complete the third must always be regarded as a great calamity by the literary world.

Besides the volumes already specified, another, of "Miscellaneous Essays" (a selection from his earlier contributions to reviews and other periodicals) has always been included in Prescott's published works. To the historical student this volume is even more interesting than to the general reader. It illustrates the change, which, since its publication, has taken place in the methods of the reviewer and of the writer of history as well.

On February 4, 1858, Mr. Prescott was stricken with paralysis. The shock was a slight one. He soon recovered from its effects and continued with undaunted perseverance his literary work. In less than a year, January 28, 1859, while at work in his library with his secretary, he fell back speechless from a second attack and died an hour or so afterwards.

It is quite within bounds to say that no historian's death ever affected more profoundly the community in which he dwelt. Other authors have been respected and admired by those with whom

they came in contact, Prescott was universally loved. No American writer was perhaps more sincerely and more widely mourned. Affable, generous, courtly, thoughtful for others, singularly winning in his personal appearance, he had drawn the hearts of all his associates to himself, while the gracious, kindly humanity manifested in every page of his writings had endeared him to thousands of readers in all parts of the world.

Mr. Prescott's distinguishing characteristic was his intense love for truth. As an author he had no thesis to establish. He never wasted time in arguments wherewith to demonstrate the soundness of his views. His single desire was to set forth with scrupulous accuracy all the facts which belonged to his subject. Some critics will have it that his tendency towards hero-worship occasionally leads him into extravagance of statement and that his gorgeous descriptions sometimes blind us to most unpleasant facts. This is possibly partly true in the case of "Ferdinand and Isabella," his first work, but even in those volumes the reader will almost always find footnotes to establish the author's statements or to indicate the possibility of a doubt which he himself felt. In clear grasp of facts, in vivid powers of narration, combined with artistic control of details, no historical writer has exceeded him. The power of philosophical analysis he did not possess in so high a degree, but no philosophical historian of the first rank was ever so widely read as William Hickling Prescott has been and still is.

For the additional knowledge concerning the

historian, which will unquestionably be desired after a perusal of his writings, the reader is referred to the charming biography, published by George Ticknor in 1864, and reissued with this edition of Prescott's works.

More than thirty years have elapsed since the last revised edition was presented to the public. Its editor, Mr. John Foster Kirk, was pre-eminently fitted for his work. He had been Mr. Prescott's private secretary for eleven years, and was perhaps more familiar than was any other man with the period of Spanish history of which Prescott wrote. He had, moreover, himself achieved a most enviable international reputation by his "Life of Charles the Bold." In his notes he condensed the additional information which a generation of scholars had contributed to the subjects treated of in Prescott's pages. Those notes are all incorporated in the present edition.

But since Kirk's notes were penned another generation of students has been investigating the history of Spain—a generation which has enjoyed more abundant opportunities for research than any scholars before had known. Numberless manuscripts have been rescued from monastic limbo, the caked dust of centuries has been scraped away from scores of volumes in the public archives, and the searchlights of modern scientific investigation have been turned upon places that once seemed hopelessly dark. As if this were not enough, explorers from many lands have plunged into the depths of the Mexican forests, and penetrated the quebradas of the Andes, in

attempts to wrest from them the secrets of their ancient history.

The result is an immense number of volumes filled with statements startlingly diverse and with conclusions widely conflicting. Many of these volumes, especially those that emanated from the explorers, were written by men unskilled in historical writing,—special pleaders, and not historians,—men who were more anxious to demonstrate the soundness of their own theories than to arrive at absolute knowledge concerning the institutions of Peru and of Mexico.

It has been the task of the editor of this edition to separate from this mass of material the conclusions in which scholars for the most part agree, and to embody those conclusions in additional footnotes. He has not ordinarily deemed it necessary to specify the authors read. Because he knows that the average reader abhors quotations hurled at him in unfamiliar tongues, he has, in quoting, always used the best known authority in English.

In preparing these new volumes for the press the texts of editions previously issued have been carefully compared in order to insure perfect accuracy. In all such matters the publishers have aimed to put forth Prescott's writings in the form that must be regarded for many years to come as the standard edition of America's most popular historian.

WILFRED H. MUNRO.

Brown University,
December 20, 1904.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE publication of Prescott's second work, "The History of the Conquest of Mexico," was justly regarded as the greatest achievement in American historical writing. The theme was not a new one. Other writers had essayed to tell the story of Hernando Cortés and of the marvellous empire which that daring and resourceful captain had converted into a province of Spain, but never before had one attempted the task in whom patient research, careful reflection, and brilliant historical imagination were so happily blended. The result of Prescott's labors was hailed with delight throughout the English-speaking world. His work was speedily translated into many languages and his subject acquired an interest which it has never since lost. To use the words of another American scholar,* who did not agree with Prescott in many of the conclusions he reached respecting the so-called Aztec civilization, "It called into existence a larger number of works than was ever before written upon any people of the same number and of the same importance."

In order to appreciate the sensation the book created we must go backward almost two generations and place ourselves in a country which num-

* Lewis H. Morgan, Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines, p. 222.

bered hardly more than eighteen millions of inhabitants—less people than now dwell in the New England States and in the four neighboring Middle States,—New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. These people were for the most part scattered throughout the regions bordering upon the Atlantic Ocean and the Great Lakes. Comparatively few were to be found west of the Mississippi River. Texas was an independent republic. California and the lands adjacent belonged to Mexico. The ownership of the vast region then vaguely known as Oregon had not been settled. Alaska was Russian territory. Between the Mississippi and the Sierras of California stretched great wastes of prairie and desert, of mountain and table-land, which now support millions of people, but which even so far-seeing a statesman as Daniel Webster then supposed would never become fit for human habitation. Communication between even the most thickly-settled States was exasperatingly infrequent. The first public telegraph line had not been constructed; the railway system of the country was still in feeble infancy; letters were carried at so much per mile and at a very heavy charge; the postage upon books was exceedingly costly. Only three years had elapsed since the first transatlantic steamship line (the Cunard) had started its pioneer vessel across the ocean. Newspapers for a long time afterwards headed their columns with announcements of news so many " days later from Europe."

Yet within a year seven thousand copies of the " Conquest of Mexico " were sold in this sparsely-

settled country, notwithstanding its slow methods of communication. Boston was acknowledged to be the literary centre of the nation, and Prescott, with the modesty which was his marked characteristic, had supposed that the unlooked-for success which had attended his first literary venture was due to the interest of his personal friends in that city of culture. Such a supposition was no longer tenable. Nor was it possible to ascribe its great popularity to the influence of opinions expressed in Great Britain. The unprecedented success of the book was due not to personal interest in its author, not to the favorable judgment of literary Boston, not to the commendation of the English reviews, but to the merits of the work itself. A wonderful story was told wonderfully well. Men read it and commented upon it as they do not comment upon books at the present time. They discussed it not only on those rare occasions when they met friends from far away, but in the long epistles they sent to those friends,—those letters from which we to-day get so many glimpses of the life of the first half of the nineteenth century. It was passed from hand to hand in the communities where only the envied few were able to buy books, but where all men, in those far less strenuous days, were anxious to read them,—in those days also when the average critical judgment concerning good literature was more highly developed than it now is, and men were much more given to reflection and discussion than they now are.

As has been stated elsewhere, Mr. Prescott was a man of considerable wealth. He was therefore

able to place upon his library tables a much larger amount of material with which to work than is ordinarily possible. Not only did he purchase most of the books published upon his subject, but he also secured copies of more valuable documentary material from the libraries and public archives both of Spain and of Mexico,—in this way gradually accumulating that library which was at his death the finest private collection of books in America.

His method of composition has already been described. First, his hours of work with his secretary were scrupulously observed each day; then came the hours of reflection and of careful sifting of authorities before pen was placed upon paper, followed by still more careful reflection before the final copy was written. The tendency to hero-worship which he shared with most American, and indeed with most British, writers became much less marked as his chapters increased,—though surely he may well be pardoned for rejoicing as he does in the exploits of one of the greatest generals in European history. It was perhaps admiration for that great captain which led him to write the history of his conquests.

In reading the "Mexico" we must always remember that the task to which Prescott devoted his energies was to give an accurate account of the stupendous campaigns through which Cortés made himself master of the lands of the Aztecs, and not to describe minutely the institutions Cortés encountered in the Valley of Mexico. An account of the habits, customs, and laws of the

people of that valley was essential to a proper comprehension of the magnitude of the Conquest. That account Prescott constructed with material gathered from all available sources, realizing all the while how very unsatisfactory those sources were. It fills about half a volume, but, as he says in his first preface, it cost him as much labor, and nearly as much time, as all the rest of his history. This part of the work has been subjected to much severe criticism, of which mention is made in the notes of this edition. Not a few of the conclusions therein set forth have been shown to be erroneous. For example, Mr. Prescott did not understand the institutions of the Aztecs. It would have been most marvellous if he had. And yet it must be said that, notwithstanding the time spent in research since Prescott's introductory chapters were penned, surprisingly little more is really *known* to-day concerning the ancient Aztec nation than was known at that time. Writers who rejected his conclusions put forth conjectures without number to supplant them, but most of those conjectures were not founded upon facts. Their authors were for the most part theorists, and not simply searchers for truth, as Prescott was. Until a larger number of the so-called " Codices " shall have been brought to light, and men shall have learned to read them as scholars have learned to read the hieroglyphics of the East, little more absolute *knowledge* is likely to be secured. It is hardly possible, however, that many more " Codices " will ever be found. If they exist, they are probably lying unnoticed in some obscure

monastery in Spain, or under a mass of material, as yet unclassified, in the public archives of that country. Of the many agencies that have worked for their destruction three especially may be noted. First, the climate of the Mexican land, with the innumerable insects that a tropical climate breeds; second, the stern determination of the Mexicans themselves to destroy the memorials of their ancient state; and, lastly, the holocausts of Zumárraga, first archbishop of Mexico, whose hand, as Prescott says, "fell more heavily than that of time itself upon the Aztec monuments." This prelate, emulating in his achievement the auto da fe of Arabic manuscripts which Archbishop Ximenes had celebrated in Granada twenty years before, burned all the manuscripts and other idolatrous material he could collect in one great "mountain-heap" in the market-place of Tlatelolco.*

But when that additional knowledge shall have been attained, it is hardly likely that any man will attempt to write anew the history of the Spanish Conquest. The information secured from the rude pictorial descriptions of the Aztec scribes and from the chiselled inscriptions of the Aztec sculptors will be incorporated as footnotes in subsequent editions of Prescott's volumes. For even the critics who arraign Prescott most severely for his misconception of Aztec institutions admit that in everything which he wrote concerning the Conquest and the men who took part in it he adhered most carefully to facts and followed conscientiously

* See vol. i. chap. iv., and, for Ximenes, Prescott's "Ferdinand and Isabella," part ii. chap. vi.

the narratives of the participants. Those narratives, as Prescott's most prominent critic (Mr. Lewis H. Morgan) admits, "may be trusted in whatever relates to the acts of the Spaniards and to the acts and the personal characteristics of the Indians; in whatever relates to their weapons, implements, and utensils, fabrics, food, and raiment, and things of a similar character."

Because he followed those contemporary writers so carefully, because with his vivid historical imagination he was able to transport himself into the remote past, to live with the conquering Spaniards the life of toil and privation that was sometimes almost beyond their iron endurance, to share with them their ever-present danger, to rejoice with them in their final victories, because so living, sharing, and rejoicing he was able to translate their dull stories into pages that sparkle with the fulness of life, men will still turn to those pages for the most graphic account of the exploits of Cortés and his associates,—for generations yet to come his work will continue to be read as one of the greatest masterpieces of descriptive literature.

W. H. M.

PREFACE

AS the Conquest of Mexico has occupied the pens of Solís and of Robertson, two of the ablest historians of their respective nations, it might seem that little could remain at the present day to be gleaned by the historical inquirer. But Robertson's narrative is necessarily brief, forming only part of a more extended work; and neither the British nor the Castilian author was provided with the important materials for relating this event which have been since assembled by the industry of Spanish scholars. The scholar who led the way in these researches was Don Juan Baptista Muñoz, the celebrated historiographer of the Indies, who, by a royal edict, was allowed free access to the national archives, and to all libraries, public, private, and monastic, in the kingdom and its colonies. The result of his long labors was a vast body of materials, of which unhappily he did not live to reap the benefit himself. His manuscripts were deposited, after his death, in the archives of the Royal Academy of History at Madrid; and that collection was subsequently augmented by the manuscripts of Don Vargas Ponçe, President of the Academy, obtained, like those of Muñoz, from different quarters, but especially from the archives of the Indies at Seville.

On my application to the Academy, in 1838, for permission to copy that part of this inestimable collection relating to Mexico and Peru, it was freely acceded to, and an eminent German scholar, one of their own number, was appointed to superintend the collation and transcription of the manuscripts; and this, it may be added, before I had any claim on the courtesy of that respectable body, as one of its associates. This conduct shows the advance of a liberal spirit in the Peninsula since the time of Dr. Robertson, who complains that he was denied admission to the most important public repositories. The favor with which my own application was regarded, however, must chiefly be attributed to the kind offices of the venerable President of the Academy, Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete; a scholar whose personal character has secured to him the same high consideration at home which his literary labors have obtained abroad. To this eminent person I am under still further obligations, for the free use which he has allowed me to make of his own manuscripts,—the fruits of a life of accumulation, and the basis of those valuable publications with which he has at different times illustrated the Spanish colonial history.

From these three magnificent collections, the result of half a century's careful researches, I have obtained a mass of unpublished documents, relating to the Conquest and Settlement of Mexico and of Peru, comprising altogether about eight thousand folio pages. They consist of instructions of the Court, military and private jour-

nals, correspondence of the great actors in the scenes, legal instruments, contemporary chronicles, and the like, drawn from all the principal places in the extensive colonial empire of Spain, as well as from the public archives in the Peninsula.

I have still further fortified the collection by gleaning such materials from Mexico itself as had been overlooked by my illustrious predecessors in these researches. For these I am indebted to the courtesy of Count Cortina, and, yet more, to that of Don Lúcas Alaman, Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mexico; but, above all, to my excellent friend, Don Angel Calderon de la Barca, late Minister Plenipotentiary to that country from the court of Madrid,—a gentleman whose high and estimable qualities, even more than his station, secured him the public confidence, and gained him free access to every place of interest and importance in Mexico.

I have also to acknowledge the very kind offices rendered to me by the Count Camaldoli at Naples; by the Duke of Serradifalco in Sicily, a nobleman whose science gives additional lustre to his rank; and by the Duke of Monteleone, the present representative of Cortés, who has courteously opened the archives of his family to my inspection. To these names must also be added that of Sir Thomas Phillips, Bart., whose precious collection of manuscripts probably surpasses in extent that of any private gentleman in Great Britain, if not in Europe; that of M. Ternaux-Compans, the proprietor of the valuable literary collection of Don

Antonio Uguina, including the papers of Muñoz, the fruits of which he is giving to the world in his excellent translations; and, lastly, that of my friend and countryman, Arthur Middleton, Esq., late Chargé-d'Affaires from the United States at the court of Madrid, for the efficient aid he has afforded me in prosecuting my inquiries in that capital.

In addition to this stock of original documents obtained through these various sources, I have diligently provided myself with such printed works as have reference to the subject, including the magnificent publications, which have appeared both in France and England, on the Antiquities of Mexico, which, from their cost and colossal dimensions, would seem better suited to a public than to a private library.

Having thus stated the nature of my materials, and the sources whence they are derived, it remains for me to add a few observations on the general plan and composition of the work. Among the remarkable achievements of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, there is no one more striking to the imagination than the conquest of Mexico. The subversion of a great empire by a handful of adventurers, taken with all its strange and picturesque accompaniments, has the air of romance rather than of sober history; and it is not easy to treat such a theme according to the severe rules prescribed by historical criticism. But, notwithstanding the seductions of the subject, I have conscientiously endeavored to distinguish fact from fiction, and to establish the narrative on

as broad a basis as possible of contemporary evidence; and I have taken occasion to corroborate the text by ample citations from authorities, usually in the original, since few of them can be very accessible to the reader. In these extracts I have scrupulously conformed to the ancient orthography, however obsolete and even barbarous, rather than impair in any degree the integrity of the original document.

Although the subject of the work is, properly, only the Conquest of Mexico, I have prepared the way for it by such a view of the civilization of the ancient Mexicans as might acquaint the reader with the character of this extraordinary race, and enable him to understand the difficulties which the Spaniards had to encounter in their subjugation. This Introductory part of the work, with the essay in the Appendix which properly belongs to the Introduction,* although both together making only half a volume, has cost me as much labor, and nearly as much time, as the remainder of the history. If I shall have succeeded in giving the reader a just idea of the true nature and extent of the civilization to which the Mexicans had attained, it will not be labor lost.

The story of the Conquest terminates with the fall of the capital. Yet I have preferred to continue the narrative to the death of Cortés, relying on the interest which the development of his character in his military career may have excited in the reader. I am not insensible to the hazard I incur by such a course. The mind, previously

* In this edition placed immediately after the Introduction.

occupied with one great idea, that of the subversion of the capital, may feel the prolongation of the story beyond that point superfluous, if not tedious, and may find it difficult, after the excitement caused by witnessing a great national catastrophe, to take an interest in the adventures of a private individual. Solís took the more politic course of concluding his narrative with the fall of Mexico, and thus leaves his readers with the full impression of that memorable event, undisturbed, on their minds. To prolong the narrative is to expose the historian to the error so much censured by the French critics in some of their most celebrated dramas, where the author by a premature *dénouement* has impaired the interest of his piece. It is the defect that necessarily attaches, though in a greater degree, to the history of Columbus, in which petty adventures among a group of islands make up the sequel of a life that opened with the magnificent discovery of a World,—a defect, in short, which it has required all the genius of Irving and the magical charm of his style perfectly to overcome.

Notwithstanding these objections, I have been induced to continue the narrative, partly from deference to the opinion of several Spanish scholars, who considered that the biography of Cortés had not been fully exhibited, and partly from the circumstance of my having such a body of original materials for this biography at my command. And I cannot regret that I have adopted this course; since, whatever lustre the Conquest may reflect on Cortés as a military achievement, it gives

but an imperfect idea of his enlightened spirit and of his comprehensive and versatile genius.

To the eye of the critic there may seem some incongruity in a plan which combines objects so dissimilar as those embraced by the present history, where the Introduction, occupied by the antiquities and origin of a nation, has somewhat the character of a *philosophic* theme, while the conclusion is strictly *biographical*, and the two may be supposed to match indifferently with the main body, or *historical* portion of the work. But I may hope that such objections will be found to have less weight in practice than in theory; and, if properly managed, that the general views of the Introduction will prepare the reader for the particulars of the Conquest, and that the great public events narrated in this will, without violence, open the way to the remaining personal history of the hero who is the soul of it. Whatever incongruity may exist in other respects, I may hope that the *unity of interest*, the only unity held of much importance by modern critics, will be found still to be preserved.

The distance of the present age from the period of the narrative might be presumed to secure the historian from undue prejudice or partiality. Yet by the American and the English reader, acknowledging so different a moral standard from that of the sixteenth century, I may possibly be thought too indulgent to the errors of the Conquerors; while by a Spaniard, accustomed to the undiluted panegyric of Solís, I may be deemed to have dealt too hardly with them. To such I can only say

that, while, on the one hand, I have not hesitated to expose in their strongest colors the excesses of the Conquerors, on the other, I have given them the benefit of such mitigating reflections as might be suggested by the circumstances and the period in which they lived. I have endeavored not only to present a picture true in itself, but to place it in its proper light, and to put the spectator in a proper point of view for seeing it to the best advantage. I have endeavored, at the expense of some repetition, to surround him with the spirit of the times, and, in a word, to make him, if I may so express myself, a contemporary of the sixteenth century. Whether, and how far, I have succeeded in this, he must determine.

For one thing, before I conclude, I may reasonably ask the reader's indulgence. Owing to the state of my eyes, I have been obliged to use a writing-case made for the blind, which does not permit the writer to see his own manuscript. Nor have I ever corrected, or even read, my own original draft. As the chirography, under these disadvantages, has been too often careless and obscure, occasional errors, even with the utmost care of my secretary, must have necessarily occurred in the transcription, somewhat increased by the barbarous phraseology imported from my Mexican authorities. I cannot expect that these errors have always been detected even by the vigilant eye of the perspicacious critic to whom the proof-sheets have been subjected.

In the Preface to the "History of Ferdinand and Isabella," I lamented that, while occupied

with that subject, two of its most attractive parts had engaged the attention of the most popular of American authors, Washington Irving. By a singular chance, something like the reverse of this has taken place in the composition of the present history, and I have found myself unconsciously taking up ground which he was preparing to occupy. It was not till I had become master of my rich collection of materials that I was acquainted with this circumstance; and, had he persevered in his design, I should unhesitatingly have abandoned my own, if not from courtesy, at least from policy; for, though armed with the weapons of Achilles, this could give me no hope of success in a competition with Achilles himself. But no sooner was that distinguished writer informed of the preparations I had made, than, with the gentlemanly spirit which will surprise no one who has the pleasure of his acquaintance, he instantly announced to me his intention of leaving the subject open to me. While I do but justice to Mr. Irving by this statement, I feel the prejudice it does to myself in the unavailing regret I am exciting in the bosom of the reader.

I must not conclude this Preface, too long protracted as it is already, without a word of acknowledgment to my friend George Ticknor, Esq., the friend of many years,—for his patient revision of my manuscript; a labor of love, the worth of which those only can estimate who are acquainted with his extraordinary erudition and his nice critical taste. If I have reserved his name for the last in the list of those to whose good offices I am

indebted, it is most assuredly not because I value his services least.

WILLIAM H. PRESCOTT.

BOSTON, October 1, 1843.

NOTE.—The author's emendations of this history include many additional notes, which, being often contradictory to the text, have been printed between brackets. They were chiefly derived from the copious annotations of Don José F. Ramirez and Don Lúcas Alaman to the two Spanish translations published in Mexico. There could be no stronger guarantee of the value and general accuracy of the work than the minute labor bestowed upon it by these distinguished scholars.—K.

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BOOK I

INTRODUCTION

VIEW OF THE AZTEC CIVILIZATION

MAP OF THE COUNTRY TRAVERSED BY THE S

Long. W. from Greenwich

FOR PRESCOTT'S HISTORY O

NIARDS ON THEIR MARCH TO MEXICO.

THE CONQUEST OF MEXICO.

CONQUEST OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I

ANCIENT MEXICO—CLIMATE AND PRODUCTS—PRIMITIVE RACES—AZTEC EMPIRE

OF all that extensive empire which once acknowledged the authority of Spain in the New World, no portion, for interest and importance, can be compared with Mexico;—and this equally, whether we consider the variety of its soil and climate; the inexhaustible stores of its mineral wealth; its scenery, grand and picturesque beyond example; the character of its ancient inhabitants, not only far surpassing in intelligence that of the other North American races, but reminding us, by their monuments, of the primitive civilization of Egypt and Hindostan; or, lastly, the peculiar circumstances of its Conquest, adventurous and romantic as any legend devised by Norman or Italian bard of chivalry. It is the purpose of the present narrative to exhibit the history of this Conquest, and that of the remarkable man by whom it was achieved.

But, in order that the reader may have a better understanding of the subject, it will be well, before entering on it, to take a general survey of the po-

litical and social institutions of the races who occupied the land at the time of its discovery.

The country of the ancient Mexicans, or Aztecs as they were called, formed but a very small part of the extensive territories comprehended in the modern republic of Mexico.[1] Its boundaries cannot be defined with certainty. They were much enlarged in the latter days of the empire, when they may be considered as reaching from about the eighteenth degree north, to the twenty-first, on the Atlantic; and from the fourteenth to the nineteenth, including a very narrow strip, on the Pacific.[2] In its greatest breadth, it could not ex-

[1] Extensive indeed, if we may trust Archbishop Lorenzana, who tells us, "It is doubtful if the country of new Spain does not border on Tartary and Greenland;—by the way of California, on the former, and by New Mexico, on the latter"! Historia de Nueva-España (México, 1770), p. 38, nota.*

[2] I have conformed to the limits fixed by Clavigero. He has, probably, examined the subject with more thoroughness and fidelity than most of his countrymen, who differ from him, and who assign a more liberal extent to the monarchy. (See his Storia antica del Messico (Cesena, 1780), dissert. 7.) The abbé, however, has not informed his readers on what frail foundations his conclusions rest. The extent of the Aztec empire is to be gathered from the writings of historians since the arrival of the Spaniards, and from the picture-rolls of tribute paid by the conquered cities; both sources extremely vague and defective. See the MSS. of the Mendoza collection, in Lord Kingsborough's magnificent publication (Antiquities of Mex-

* [The limits fixed by historical writers to the territories of the Aztec Confederacy vary startlingly. Prescott's estimate is too large. Lewis H. Morgan (Houses and House Life of the American Aborigines, p. 223) considers its land area to have been about that of Rhode Island—the smallest State in the American Union—*i.e.*, about 1250 square miles. Medio tutissimus ibis. The term Empire is misleading. The states of Querétaro, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Guerrero, and much of La Puebla, in modern Mexico, almost surround the so-called Empire of Montezuma. Possibly the tributary pueblos may have covered an area equal to that of the State of Massachusetts.—M.]

ceed five degrees and a half, dwindling, as it approached its southeastern limits, to less than two. It covered, probably, less than sixteen thousand square leagues.[3] Yet such is the remarkable formation of this country, that, though not more than twice as large as New England, it presented every variety of climate, and was capable of yielding nearly every fruit, found between the equator and the Arctic circle.

All along the Atlantic, the country is bordered by a broad tract, called the *tierra caliente,* or hot region, which has the usual high temperature of equinoctial lands. Parched and sandy plains are intermingled with others, of exuberant fertility, almost impervious from thickets of aromatic shrubs and wild flowers, in the midst of which tower up

ico, comprising Facsimiles of Ancient Paintings and Hieroglyphics, together with the Monuments of New Spain. London, 1830). The difficulty of the inquiry is much increased by the fact of the conquests having been made, as will be seen hereafter, by the united arms of three powers, so that it is not always easy to tell to which party they eventually belonged. The affair is involved in so much uncertainty that Clavigero, notwithstanding the positive assertions in his text, has not ventured, in his map, to define the precise limits of the empire, either towards the north, where it mingles with the Tezcucan empire, or towards the south, where, indeed, he has fallen into the egregious blunder of asserting that, while the Mexican territory reached to the fourteenth degree, it did not include any portion of Guatemala. (See tom. i. p. 29, and tom. iv. dissert. 7.) The Tezcucan chronicler Ixtlilxochitl puts in a sturdy claim for the paramount empire of his own nation. Historia Chichimeca, MS., cap. 39, 53, et alibi.

[3] Eighteen to twenty thousand, according to Humboldt, who considers the Mexican territory to have been the same with that occupied by the modern intendancies of Mexico, Puebla, Vera Cruz, Oaxaca, and Valladolid. (Essai politique sur le Royaume de Nouvelle-Espagne (Paris, 1825), tom. i. p. 196.) This last, however, was all, or nearly all, included in the rival kingdom of Michoacán, as he himself more correctly states in another part of his work. Comp. tom. ii. p. 164.

trees of that magnificent growth which is found only within the tropics. In this wilderness of sweets lurks the fatal *malaria,* engendered, probably, by the decomposition of rank vegetable substances in a hot and humid soil.* The season of the bilious fever,—*vómito,* as it is called,—which scourges these coasts, continues from the spring to the autumnal equinox, when it is checked by the cold winds that descend from Hudson's Bay. These winds in the winter season frequently freshen into tempests, and sweeping down the Atlantic coast and the winding Gulf of Mexico, burst with the fury of a hurricane on its unprotected shores, and on the neighboring West India islands. Such are the mighty spells with which Nature has surrounded this land of enchantment, as if to guard the golden treasures locked up within its bosom. The genius and enterprise of man have proved more potent than her spells.

After passing some twenty leagues across this burning region, the traveller finds himself rising into a purer atmosphere. His limbs recover their elasticity. He breathes more freely, for his senses are not now oppressed by the sultry heats and intoxicating perfumes of the valley. The aspect of nature, too, has changed, and his eye no longer revels among the gay variety of colors with which the landscape was painted there. The vanilla, the indigo, and the flowering cacao-groves disappear as he advances. The sugar-cane and the glossy-leaved banana still accompany him; and, when he

* [Immediate decay follows death. All traces of a buried corpse vanish in three or four years.—M.]

has ascended about four thousand feet, he sees in the unchanging verdure, and the rich foliage of the liquid-amber tree, that he has reached the height where clouds and mists settle, in their passage from the Mexican Gulf. This is the region of perpetual humidity; but he welcomes it with pleasure, as announcing his escape from the influence of the deadly *vómito.*[4] He has entered the *tierra templada,* or temperate region, whose character resembles that of the temperate zone of the globe. The features of the scenery become grand, and even terrible. His road sweeps along the base of mighty mountains, once gleaming with volcanic fires, and still resplendent in their mantles of snow, which serve as beacons to the mariner, for many a league at sea. All around he beholds traces of their ancient combustion, as his road passes along vast tracts of lava, bristling in the innumerable fantastic forms into which the fiery torrent has been thrown by the obstacles in its career. Perhaps, at the same moment, as he casts his eye down some steep slope, or almost unfathomable ravine, on the margin of the road, he sees their depths glowing with the rich blooms and enamelled vegetation of the tropics. Such are the singular contrasts pre-

[4] The traveller who enters the country across the dreary sand-hills of Vera Cruz will hardly recognize the truth of the above description. He must look for it in other parts of the *tierra caliente.* Of recent tourists, no one has given a more gorgeous picture of the impressions made on his senses by these sunny regions than Latrobe, who came on shore at Tampico (Rambler in Mexico (New York, 1836), chap. 1),—a traveller, it may be added, whose descriptions of man and nature in our own country, where we can judge, are distinguished by a sobriety and fairness that entitle him to confidence in his delineation of other countries.

sented, at the same time, to the senses, in this picturesque region!

Still pressing upwards, the traveller mounts into other climates, favorable to other kinds of cultivation. The yellow maize, or Indian corn, as we usually call it, has continued to follow him up from the lowest level; but he now first sees fields of wheat, and the other European grains brought into the country by the Conquerors. Mingled with them, he views the plantations of the aloe or maguey (*agave Americana*), applied to such various and important uses by the Aztecs. The oaks now acquire a sturdier growth, and the dark forests of pine announce that he has entered the *tierra fria,* or cold region,—the third and last of the great natural terraces into which the country is divided. When he has climbed to the height of between seven and eight thousand feet, the weary traveller sets his foot on the summit of the Cordillera of the Andes,—the colossal range that, after traversing South America and the Isthmus of Darien, spreads out, as it enters Mexico, into that vast sheet of table-land which maintains an elevation of more than six thousand feet, for the distance of nearly two hundred leagues, until it gradually declines in the higher latitudes of the north.[5]

Across this mountain rampart a chain of vol-

[5] This long extent of country varies in elevation from 5570 to 8856 feet,—equal to the height of the passes of Mount Cenis or the Great St. Bernard. The table-land stretches still three hundred leagues farther, before it declines to a level of 2624 feet. Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. pp. 157, 255.*

* [" The Continental range of Humboldt does not exist. The Andean system ends in northern Colombia. The Rocky Mountain system

canic hills stretches, in a westerly direction, of still more stupendous dimensions, forming, indeed, some of the highest land on the globe. Their peaks, entering the limits of perpetual snow, diffuse a grateful coolness over the elevated plateaus below; for these last, though termed "cold," enjoy a climate the mean temperature of which is not lower than that of the central parts of Italy.[6] The air is exceedingly dry; the soil, though naturally good, is rarely clothed with the luxuriant vegetation of the lower regions. It frequently, indeed, has a parched and barren aspect, owing partly to the greater evaporation which takes place on these lofty plains, through the diminished pressure of the atmosphere, and partly, no doubt, to the want of trees to shelter the soil from the fierce influence of the summer sun. In the time of the Aztecs, the table-land was thickly covered with larch, oak, cypress, and other forest trees, the extraordinary dimensions of some of which, remaining to the present day, show that the curse of barrenness in later times is chargeable more on man than on nature.

[6] About 62° Fahrenheit, or 17° Réaumur. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. p. 273.) The more elevated plateaus of the table-land, as the Valley of Toluca, about 8500 feet above the sea, have a stern climate, in which the thermometer, during a great part of the day, rarely rises beyond 45° F. Idem (loc. cit.), and Malte-Brun (Universal Geography, Eng. trans., book 83), who is, indeed, in this part of his work, but an echo of the former writer.

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ends in the plateau south of the City of Mexico. The system between lies across the trend of the other two systems and differs from them in origin. It belongs to the same chain which crops up in the Antilles, *i.e.*, to the system appearing in Martinique and Santa Lucia."—Robert T. Hill, of U. S. Geological Survey, in Century Magazine, July, 1902.—M.]

Indeed, the early Spaniards made as indiscriminate war on the forest as did our Puritan ancestors, though with much less reason. After once conquering the country, they had no lurking ambush to fear from the submissive, semi-civilized Indian, and were not, like our forefathers, obliged to keep watch and ward for a century. This spoliation of the ground, however, is said to have been pleasing to their imaginations, as it reminded them of the plains of their own Castile,—the table-land of Europe; [7] where the nakedness of the landscape forms the burden of every traveller's lament who visits that country.

Midway across the continent, somewhat nearer the Pacific than the Atlantic Ocean, at an elevation of nearly seven thousand five hundred feet, is the celebrated Valley of Mexico. It is of an oval form, about sixty-seven leagues in circumference,[8] and is encompassed by a towering rampart of porphyritic rock, which nature seems to have provided, though ineffectually, to protect it from invasion.

The soil, once carpeted with a beautiful verdure

[7] The elevation of the Castiles, according to the authority repeatedly cited, is about 350 toises, or 2100 feet above the ocean. (Humboldt's Dissertation, apud Laborde, Itinéraire descriptif de l'Espagne (Paris, 1827), tom. i. p. 5.) It is rare to find plains in Europe of so great a height.

[8] Archbishop Lorenzana estimates the circuit of the Valley at ninety leagues, correcting at the same time the statement of Cortés, which puts it at seventy, very near the truth, as appears from the result of M. de Humboldt's measurement, cited in the text. Its length is about eighteen leagues, by twelve and a half in breadth. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 29.—Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 101.) Humboldt's map of the Valley of Mexico forms the third in his "Atlas géographique et physique," and, like all the others in the collection, will be found of inestimable value to the traveller, the geologist, and the historian.

and thickly sprinkled with stately trees, is often bare, and, in many places, white with the incrustation of salts caused by the draining of the waters. Five lakes are spread over the Valley, occupying one-tenth of its surface.[9] On the opposite borders of the largest of these basins, much shrunk in its dimensions [10] since the days of the Aztecs, stood the cities of Mexico and Tezcuco, the capitals of the two most potent and flourishing states of Anahuac, whose history, with that of the mysterious races that preceded them in the country,* exhibits some

[9] Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. pp. 29, 44–49.—Malte-Brun, book 85. This latter geographer assigns only 6700 feet for the level of the Valley, contradicting himself (comp. book 83), or rather Humboldt, to whose pages he helps himself *plenis manibus,* somewhat too liberally, indeed, for the scanty references at the bottom of his page.

[10] Torquemada accounts in part for this diminution by supposing that, as God permitted the waters, which once covered the whole earth, to subside after mankind had been nearly exterminated for their iniquities, so he allowed the waters of the Mexican lake to subside, in token of good will and reconciliation, after the idolatrous races of the land had been destroyed by the Spaniards! (Monarchía Indiana (Madrid, 1723), tom. i. p. 309.) Quite as probable, if not as orthodox, an explanation, may be found in the active evaporation of these upper regions, and in the fact of an immense drain having been constructed, during the lifetime of the good father, to reduce the waters of the principal lake and protect the capital from inundation.

* [It is perhaps to be regretted that, instead of a meagre notice of the Toltecs with a passing allusion to earlier races, the author did not give a separate chapter to the history of the country during the ages preceding the Conquest. That history, it is true, resting on tradition or on questionable records mingled with legendary and mythological relations, is full of obscurity and doubt. But whatever its uncertainty in regard to details, it presents a mass of general facts supported by analogy and by the stronger evidence of language and of the existing relics of the past. The number and diversity of the architectural and other remains found on the soil of Mexico and the adjacent regions, and the immense variety of the spoken languages, with the vestiges of others that have passed out of use,—all per-

of the nearest approaches to civilization to be met with anciently on the North American continent.

Of these races the most conspicuous were the Toltecs. Advancing from a northerly direction, but from what region is uncertain,* they entered the

haps derived originally from a common stock, but exhibiting different stages of development or decay, and capable of being classified into several distinct families,—point to conclusions that render the subject one of the most attractive fields for critical investigation. These concurrent testimonies leave no doubt that, like portions of the Old World similarly favored in regard to climate, soil, and situation, the central regions of America were occupied from a very remote period by nations which made distinct advances in civilization, and passed through a cycle of revolutions comparable to that of which the Valley of the Euphrates and other parts of Asia were anciently the scene. The useful arts were known and practised, wealth was accumulated, social systems exhibiting a certain refinement and a peculiar complexity were organized, states were established which flourished, decayed,—either from the effects of isolation or an inherent incapacity for continuance,—and were finally overthrown by invaders, by whom the experiment was repeated, though not always with equal success. Some of these nations passed away, leaving no trace but their names; others, whose very names are unknown, left mysterious monuments imbedded in the soil or records that are undecipherable. Of those that still remain, comprising about a dozen distinct races speaking a hundred and twenty different dialects, we have the traditions preserved either in their own records or in those of the Spanish discoverers. The task of constructing out of these materials a history shorn of the adornments of mythology and fable has been attempted by the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg (Histoire des Nations civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique-Centrale, durant les Siècles antérieurs à Christophe Colomb, 4 vols., Paris, 1857–59), and, whatever may be thought of the method he has pursued, his research is unquestionable, and his views—very different from those which he has since put forth—merit attention. A more practical effort has been made by Don Manuel Orozco y Berra to trace the order, diffusion, and relations of the various races by the differences, the intermixtures, and the geographical limits of their languages. (Geografía de las Lenguas y Carta etnográfica de México, precedidas de un Ensayo de Clasificacion de las mismas Lenguas y de Apuntes para las Inmigraciones de las Tribus, México, 1864.)—K.]

* [The uncertainty is not diminished by our being told that Tollan, Tullan, Tulan, or Tula (called also Tlapallan and Huehuetlapallan)

territory of Anahuac,[11] probably before the close of the seventh century. Of course, little can be

[11] Anahuac, according to Humboldt, comprehended only the country between the fourteenth and twenty-first degrees of north lati-

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was the original seat of this people, since we are still left in doubt whether the country so designated—like Aztlan, the supposed point of departure of the Aztecs—is to be located in New Mexico, California, the northwestern extremity of America, or in Asia. M. Brasseur de Bourbourg (whose later speculations, in which the name plays a conspicuous part, will be noticed more appropriately in the Appendix) found in the Quiché manuscripts mention of four Tollans, one of them "in the east, on the other side of the sea." "But," he adds, "in what part of the world is it to be placed? *C'est là encore une question bien difficile à résoudre.*" (Hist. des Nations civilisées du Mexique, tom. i. pp. 167, 168.) Nor will the etymology much help us. According to Buschmann, *Tollan* is derived from *tolin,* reed, and signifies "place of reeds,"—"Ort der Binsen, Platz mit Binsen gewachsen, *juncetum.*" (Über die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 682.) He refers, however, to a different derivation, suggested by a writer who has made it the basis of one of those extraordinary theories which are propounded from time to time, to account for the first diffusion of the human race, and more particularly for the original settlement of America. According to this theory, the cradle of mankind was the Himalayan Mountains. "But the collective name of these lofty regions was very anciently designated by appellations the roots of which were *Tal, Tol, Tul,* meaning tall, high, . . . as it does yet in many languages, the English, Chinese, and Arabic for instance. Such were *Tolo, Thala, Talaha, Tulan,* etc., in the old Sanscrit and primitive languages of Asia. Whence came the Asiatic *Atlas* and also the *Atlantes* of the Greeks, who, spreading through the world westerly, gave these names to many other places and notions. . . . The Talas or Atlantes occupied or conquered Europe and Africa, nay, went to America in very early times. . . . In Greece they became *Atalantes, Talautians* of Epirus, *Aetolians.* . . . They gave name to Italy, *Aitala* meaning land eminent, . . . to the Atlantic Ocean, and to the great Atlantis, or America, called in the Hindu books *Atala* or *Tala-tolo,* the fourth world, where dwelt giants or powerful men. . . . America is also filled with their names and deeds from Mexico and Carolina to Peru: the *Tol-tecas,* people of Tol, and Aztlan, *Otolum* near Palenque, many towns of *Tula* and *Tolu;* the *Talas* of Michuacan, the *Matalans, Atalans, Tulukis,* etc., of North America." (C. S. Rafinesque, Atlantic Journal, Philadelphia, 1832–33.) It need hardly be added that Tula has also been identified with the equally unknown and long-sought-for *ultima*

gleaned with certainty respecting a people whose written records have perished, and who are known to us only through the traditionary legends of the nations that succeeded them.[12] By the general agreement of these, however, the Toltecs were well

tude. (Essai politique, tom. i. p. 197.) According to Clavigero, it included nearly all since known as New Spain. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 27.) Veytia uses it, also, as synonymous with New Spain. (Historia antigua de Méjico (Méjico, 1836), tom. i. cap. 12.) The first of these writers probably allows too little, as the latter do too much, for its boundaries. Ixtlilxochitl says it extended four hundred leagues south of the Otomi country. (Hist. Chichimeca, MS., cap. 73.) The word Anahuac signifies *near the water*. It was, probably, first applied to the country around the lakes in the Mexican Valley, and gradually extended to the remoter regions occupied by the Aztecs and the other semi-civilized races. Or possibly the name may have been intended, as Veytia suggests (Hist. antig., lib 1, cap. 1), to denote the land between the waters of the Atlantic and Pacific.*

[12] Clavigero talks of Boturini's having written "on the faith of the Toltec historians." (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 128.) But that scholar does not pretend to have ever met with a Toltec manuscript himself, and had heard of only one in the possession of Ixtlilxochitl. (See his Idea de una nueva Historia general de la América Septentrional (Madrid, 1746), p. 110.) The latter writer tells us that his account of the Toltec and Chichimec races was "derived from interpretation" (probably of the Tezcucan paintings), "and from

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Thule, with the simplifying effect of bringing two streams of inquiry into one channel. Meanwhile, by a different kind of criticism, the whole question is dissipated into thin air, *Tollan* and *Aztlan* being resolved into names of mere mythical import, and the regions thus designated transferred from the earth to the bright domain of the sky, from which the descriptions in the legends appear to have been borrowed. See Brinton, Myths of the New World, pp. 88, 89.—K.]

* [This suggestion of Veytia is unworthy of attention,—refuted by the actual application and appropriateness of the name, and by the state of geographical knowledge and ideas at the period when it must have originated. A modern traveller, describing the appearance of the great plains as seen from the summit of Popocatepetl, remarks, "Even now that the lakes have shrunk to a fraction of their former size, we could see the fitness of the name given in old times to the Valley of Mexico, *Anahuac*, that is, By the water-side." Tylor, Anahuac; or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern (London, 1861), p. 270.—K.]

instructed in agriculture and many of the most useful mechanic arts; were nice workers of metals; invented the complex arrangement of time adopted by the Aztecs; and, in short, were the true fountains of the civilization which distinguished this part of the continent in later times.[13] They established their capital at Tula, north of the Mexican Valley, and the remains of extensive buildings were to be discerned there at the time of the Conquest.[14] The noble ruins of religious and other edifices, still to be seen in various parts of New Spain, are referred to this people, whose name, *Toltec,* has passed into a synonym for *architect.*[15] Their shadowy history reminds us of those primitive races who preceded the ancient Egyp-

the traditions of old men;" poor authority for events which had passed centuries before. Indeed, he acknowledges that their narratives were so full of absurdity and falsehood that he was obliged to reject nine-tenths of them. (See his Relaciones, MS., no. 5.) The cause of truth would not have suffered much, probably, if he had rejected nine-tenths of the remainder.*

[13] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 2.—Idem, Relaciones, MS., no. 2.—Sahagun, Historia general de las Cosas de Nueva-España (México, 1829), lib. 10, cap. 29.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 27.

[14] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 10, cap. 29.

[15] Sahagun, ubi supra.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 1, cap. 14.

* [Ixtlilxochitl's language does not necessarily imply that he considered any of the relations he had received as false or absurd, nor does he say that he had rejected nine-tenths of them. What he has written is, he asserts, "the true history of the Toltecs," though it does not amount to nine-tenths of the whole ("de lo que ello fué"), *i.e.,* of what had been contained in the original records; these records having perished, and he himself having abridged the accounts he had been able to obtain of their contents, as well for the sake of brevity as because of the marvellous character of the relations ("son tan estrañas las cosas y tan peregrinas y nunca oidas"). The sources of his information are also incorrectly described; but a further mention of them will be found in a note at the end of this Book.—K.]

tians in the march of civilization; fragments of whose monuments, as they are seen at this day, incorporated with the buildings of the Egyptians themselves, give to these latter the appearance of almost modern constructions.[16]

After a period of four centuries, the Toltecs, who had extended their sway over the remotest borders of Anahuac,[17] having been greatly reduced, it is said, by famine, pestilence, and unsuccessful wars, disappeared from the land as silently and mysteriously as they had entered it. A few of them still lingered behind, but much the greater number, probably, spread over the region of Central America and the neighboring isles; and the traveller now speculates on the majestic ruins of Mitla and Palenque, as possibly the work of this extraordinary people.[18] *

After the lapse of another hundred years, a numerous and rude tribe, called the Chichimecs, en-

[16] Description de l'Égypte (Paris, 1890), Antiquités, tom. i. cap. 1. Veytia has traced the migrations of the Toltecs with sufficient industry, scarcely rewarded by the necessarily doubtful credit of the results. Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 21–33.

[17] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 73.

[18] Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 33.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap 3.—Idem, Relaciones, MS., nos. 4, 5.—Father Torquemada —perhaps misinterpreting the Tezcucan hieroglyphics—has accounted for this mysterious disappearance of the Toltecs by such *fee-faw-fum* stories of giants and demons as show his appetite for the marvellous was fully equal to that of any of his calling. See his Monarch. Ind., lib. 1, cap. 14.

* [This supposition, neither adopted nor rejected in the text, was, as Mr. Tylor remarks, "quite tenable at the time that Prescott wrote," being founded on the statements of early writers and partially supported by the conclusions of Mr. Stephens, who believed that the ruined cities of Oaxaca, Chiapas, Yucatan, and Guatemala

tered the deserted country from the regions of the far Northwest. They were speedily followed by other races, of higher civilization, perhaps of the same family with the Toltecs, whose language they appear to have spoken. The most noted of these were the Aztecs or Mexicans, and the Acolhuans. The latter, better known in later times by the name of Tezcucans, from their capital, Tez-

dated from a comparatively recent period, and were still flourishing at the time of the Spanish Conquest; and that their inhabitants, the ancestors, as he contends, of the degenerate race that now occupies the soil, were of the same stock and spoke the same language as the Mexicans. (Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas, and Yucatan.) But these opinions have been refuted by later investigators. Orozco y Berra, in an elaborate and satisfactory examination of the question, discusses all the evidence relating to it, compares the remains in the southern provinces with those of the Valley of Mexico, points out the essential differences in the architecture, sculpture, and inscriptions, and arrives at the conclusion that there was "no point of contact or resemblance" between the two civilizations. He considers that of the southern provinces, though of a far higher grade, as long anterior in time to the Toltec domination,—the work of a people which had passed away, under the assaults of barbarism, at a period prior to all traditions, leaving no name and no trace of their existence save those monuments which, neglected and forgotten by their successors, have become the riddle of later generations.* Geografía de las Lenguas de México, pp. 122–131. See also Tylor, Anahuac, p. 189, et seq.—K.]

* [Charnay (Ancient Cities of the New World) holds that both Mitla and Palenque are of Toltec origin. He has no doubt whatsoever concerning Palenque. This he thinks was a Holy City whose inhabitants dispersed at the first alarm of the Conquest (p. 245). (See, further, p. 246.) Dr. Brinton holds that Father Duran, Historia de las Indias de Nueva España, Tezozomoc, Cronica Mexicana, and the Codex Ramirez identify the Toltecs with the Aztecs. As John Fiske puts it, "it is well to beware, however, about meddling much with these Toltecs." Mr. Fiske urges like caution concerning the Chichimecs. Bandelier (Archæological Tour, p. 192) points out that Ixtlilxochitl, the historian of the Chichimecs, "wrote for an interested object, and with a view of sustaining tribal claims in the eyes of the Spanish government."—M.]

cuco,[19] on the eastern border of the Mexican lake, were peculiarly fitted, by their comparatively mild religion and manners, for receiving the tincture of civilization which could be derived from the few Toltecs that still remained in the country.* This, in their turn, they communicated to the barbarous Chichimecs, a large portion of whom became amalgamated with the new settlers as one nation.[20]

Availing themselves of the strength derived, not

[19] *Tezcuco* signifies "place of detention;" as several of the tribes who successively occupied Anahuac were said to have halted some time at the spot. Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 10.†

[20] The historian speaks, in one page, of the Chichimecs burrowing in caves, or, at best, in cabins of straw, and, in the next, talks gravely

* [It is difficult to reconcile the two statements that the Toltecs "were the true fountains of the civilization which distinguished this part of the continent in later times," and that they "disappeared from the land as silently and mysteriously as they had entered it," leaving an interval of more than a century before the appearance of the Aztecs and the Acolhuans. If the latter received from the former the knowledge of those arts in which they speedily rivalled them, it must have been by more direct communication and transmission than can be inferred from the mention of a small fraction of the Toltec population as remaining in the country,—a fact which has itself the appearance of having been invented to meet the difficulty. Orozco y Berra compares this transitional period with that which followed the overthrow of the Roman Empire; but if in the former case there was, in his own words, "no conquest, but only an occupation, no war because no one to contend with," the analogy altogether fails. Brasseur de Bourbourg reduces the interval between the departure of the Toltecs and the arrival of the Chichimecs to a few years, and supposes that a considerable number of the former inhabitants remained scattered through the Valley. If, however, it be allowable to substitute probabilities for doubtful relations, it is an easier solution to believe that no interval occurred and that no emigration took place.—K.]

† ["Über die Etymologie lässt sich nichts sicheres sagen," says Buschmann, "so zuversichtlich auch Prescott, wohl nach Ixtlilxochitl, den Namen durch *place of detention* übersetzt." Uber die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 697.—K.]

only from this increase of numbers, but from their own superior refinement, the Acolhuans gradually stretched their empire over the ruder tribes in the north; while their capital was filled with a numerous population, busily employed in many of the more useful and even elegant arts of a civilized community. In this palmy state, they were suddenly assaulted by a warlike neighbor, the Tepanecs, their own kindred, and inhabitants of the same valley as themselves. Their provinces were overrun, their armies beaten, their king assassinated, and the flourishing city of Tezcuco became the prize of the victor. From this abject condition the uncommon abilities of the young prince, Nezahualcoyotl, the rightful heir to the crown, backed by the efficient aid of his Mexican allies, at length redeemed the state, and opened to it a new career of prosperity, even more brilliant than the former.[21]

The Mexicans, with whom our history is principally concerned, came also, as we have seen, from the remote regions of the North,—the populous hive of nations in the New World, as it has been in

of their *señoras, infantas,* and *caballeros!* * Ibid., cap. 9, et seq.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 1–10.—Camargo, Historia de Tlascala, MS.

[21] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 9–20.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 29–54.

* [The confusion arises from the fact that the name of Chichimecs, originally that of a single tribe, and subsequently of its many offshoots, was also used, like the term *barbarians* in mediæval Italy, to designate successive hordes, of whatever race, being sometimes employed as a mark of contempt, and sometimes assumed as an honorable appellation. It is found applied to the Otomies, the Toltecs, and many other races.—K.]

the Old.* They arrived on the borders of Anahuac towards the beginning of the thirteenth century, some time after the occupation of the land by the kindred races. For a long time they did not establish themselves in any permanent residence, but continued shifting their quarters to different parts of the Mexican Valley, enduring all the casualties and hardships of a migratory life. On one occasion they were enslaved by a more powerful tribe; but their ferocity soon made them formidable to their masters.[22] After a series of wanderings and adventures which need not shrink from comparison

[22] These were the Colhuans, not Acolhuans, with whom Humboldt, and most writers since, have confounded them.† See his Essai politique, tom. i. p. 414; ii. p. 37.

* [Some recent writers have contended that Mexico must have been peopled originally by migrations from the South. Aztec names and communities, and traces of Toltec settlements long anterior to the occupation of Anahuac by the same people, are found in several parts of Central America. The most primitive traditions, as well as the remains of the earliest civilization, belong also to the same quarter. This latter fact, however, is considered by Orozco y Berra as itself an evidence of the migrations having been from the North, the first comers having been naturally attracted southward by a warmer climate and more fertile soil, or pushed onward in this direction by successive invasions from behind. Contradictory inferences have in like manner been drawn from the existence of Aztec remains and settlements in New Mexico and Arizona. All that can be said with confidence is that neither of the opposing theories rests on a secure and sufficient basis.—K.]

† [Humboldt, strictly speaking, has not confounded the Colhuans with the Acolhuans, but has written, in the places cited, the latter name for the former. "Letzterer Name," says Buschmann, "ist der erstere mit dem Zusatz von *atl* Wasser,—Wasser Colhuer." (Uber die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 690.) Yet the two tribes, according to the same authority, were entirely distinct, one alone—though which, he is unable to determine—being of the Nahuatlac race. Orozco y Berra, however, makes them both of this stock, the Acolhuans being one of the main branches, the Colhuans merely the descendants of the Toltec remnant in Anahuac.—K.]

with the most extravagant legends of the heroic ages of antiquity, they at length halted on the southwestern borders of the principal lake, in the year 1325. They there beheld, perched on the stem of a prickly pear, which shot out from the crevice of a rock that was washed by the waves, a royal eagle of extraordinary size and beauty, with a serpent in his talons, and his broad wings opened to the rising sun. They hailed the auspicious omen, announced by an oracle as indicating the site of their future city, and laid its foundations by sinking piles into the shallows; for the low marshes were half buried under water. On these they erected their light fabrics of reeds and rushes, and sought a precarious subsistence from fishing, and from the wild fowl which frequented the waters, as well as from the cultivation of such simple vegetables as they could raise on their floating gardens. The place was called Tenochtitlan, in token of its miraculous origin, though only known to Europeans by its other name of Mexico,* derived from their war-god, Mexitli.[23] The legend of its foundation is still further commemorated by the device of the eagle and the cactus, which form the arms

[23] Clavigero gives good reasons for preferring the etymology of Mexico above noticed, to various others. (See his Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 168, nota.) The name *Tenochtitlan* signifies *tunal* (a cactus) *on a stone*. Esplicacion de la Col. de Mendoza, apud Antiq. of Mexico, vol. iv.

* [This is not quite correct, since the form used in the letters of Cortés and other early documents is *Temixtitan*, which is explained as a corruption of Tenochtitlan. The letters *x* and *ch* are convertible, and have the same sound,—that of the English *sh*. *Mexico* is *Mexitl* with the place-designation *co, tl* final being dropped before an affix.—K.]

of the modern Mexican republic. Such were the humble beginnings of the Venice of the Western World.[24] *

The forlorn condition of the new settlers was made still worse by domestic feuds. A part of the citizens seceded from the main body, and formed a separate community on the neighboring marshes. Thus divided, it was long before they could aspire to the acquisition of territory on the main land. They gradually increased, however, in numbers, and strengthened themselves yet more by various improvements in their polity and military discipline, while they established a reputation for courage as well as cruelty in war which made their

[24] "Datur hæc venia antiquitati," says Livy, "ut, miscendo humana divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat." Hist. Præf.—See, for the above paragraph, Col. de Mendoza, plate 1, apud Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i.,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 10,—Toribio, Historia de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8,—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 15.—Clavigero, after a laborious examination, assigns the following dates to some of the prominent events noticed in the text. No two authorities agree on them; and this is not strange, considering that Clavigero—the most inquisitive of all—does not always agree with himself. (Compare his dates for the coming of the Acolhuans, tom. i. p. 147, and tom. iv., dissert. 2:)—

	A. D.
The Toltecs arrived in Anahuac	648
They abandoned the country	1051
The Chichimecs arrived	1170
The Acolhuans arrived about	1200
The Mexicans reached Tula	1196
They founded Mexico	1325

See his dissert. 2, sec. 12. In the last date, the one of most importance, he is confirmed by the learned Veytia, who differs from him in all the others. Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 15.

* [In a somewhat similar way was founded the Italian Venice. It was the fear of death at the hands of Attila and his Huns that caused the peopling of the islands among the lagoons of the Adriatic. It was the easy subsistence the lagoons afforded that caused the steady growth of the Italian village.—M.]

name terrible throughout the Valley. In the early part of the fifteenth century, nearly a hundred years from the foundation of the city, an event took place which created an entire revolution in the circumstances and, to some extent, in the character of the Aztecs. This was the subversion of the Tezcucan monarchy by the Tepanecs, already noticed. When the oppressive conduct of the victors had at length aroused a spirit of resistance, its prince, Nezahualcoyotl, succeeded, after incredible perils and escapes, in mustering such a force as, with the aid of the Mexicans, placed him on a level with his enemies. In two successive battles, these were defeated with great slaughter, their chief slain, and their territory, by one of those sudden reverses which characterize the wars of petty states, passed into the hands of the conquerors. It was awarded to Mexico, in return for its important services.*

Then was formed that remarkable league, which, indeed, has no parallel in history. It was agreed between the states of Mexico, Tezcuco, and the neighboring little kingdom of Tlacopan, that they should mutually support each other in their wars, offensive and defensive, and that in the distribution of the spoil one-fifth should be assigned to Tlacopan, and the remainder be divided, in what proportions is uncertain, between the other powers. The Tezcucan writers claim an equal share for their nation with the Aztecs. But this does not seem to

* [This confederacy occupied one of the strongest defensive positions ever held by Indians. It gradually extended its sway over a large part of the Mexican territory. This "sway," however, as Fiske points out, was not a military occupation of the country. It was a "system of plunder enforced by terror."—M.]

be warranted by the immense increase of territory subsequently appropriated by the latter. And we may account for any advantage conceded to them by the treaty, on the supposition that, however inferior they may have been originally, they were, at the time of making it, in a more prosperous condition than their allies, broken and dispirited by long oppression. What is more extraordinary than the treaty itself, however, is the fidelity with which it was maintained. During a century of uninterrupted warfare that ensued, no instance occurred where the parties quarrelled over the division of the spoil, which so often makes shipwreck of similar confederacies among civilized states.[25]

The allies for some time found sufficient occupation for their arms in their own valley; but they soon overleaped its rocky ramparts, and by the middle of the fifteenth century, under the first Montezuma, had spread down the sides of the table-land to the borders of the Gulf of Mexico. Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital, gave evidence of the public prosperity. Its frail tenements were

[25] The loyal Tezcucan chronicler claims the supreme dignity for his own sovereign, if not the greatest share of the spoil, by this imperial compact. (Hist. Chich., cap. 32.) Torquemada, on the other hand, claims one-half of all the conquered lands for Mexico. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 40.) All agree in assigning only one-fifth to Tlacopan; and Veytia (Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 3) and Zurita (Rapport sur les différentes Classes de Chefs de la Nouvelle-Espagne, trad. de Ternaux (Paris, 1840), p. 11), both very competent critics, acquiesce in an equal division between the two principal states in the confederacy. An ode, still extant, of Nezahualcoyotl, in its Castilian version, bears testimony to the singular union of the three powers:

"solo se acordarán en las Naciones
lo bien que gobernáron
las *tres Cabezas* que el Imperio honráron."
Cantares del Emperador

supplanted by solid structures of stone and lime. Its population rapidly increased. Its old feuds were healed. The citizens who had seceded were again brought under a common government with the main body, and the quarter they occupied was permanently connected with the parent city; the dimensions of which, covering the same ground, were much larger than those of the modern capital of Mexico.[26] *

Fortunately, the throne was filled by a succession of able princes, who knew how to profit by their enlarged resources and by the martial enthusiasm of the nation. Year after year saw them return, loaded with the spoils of conquered cities, and with throngs of devoted captives, to their capital. No state was able long to resist the accumulated strength of the confederates. At the beginning

[26] See the plans of the ancient and modern capital, in Bullock's "Mexico," first edition. The original of the ancient map was obtained by that traveller from the collection of the unfortunate Boturini; if, as seems probable, it is the one indicated on page 13 of his Catalogue, I find no warrant for Mr. Bullock's statement that it was the one prepared for Cortés by the order of Montezuma.

* [The first man chosen to be the chief of men (tlacatecuhtli), or superior officer of the confederacy, was Acamapichtli. His election took place in 1375, and he is sometimes called by European writers the "founder of the confederacy." His name, translated, was "Handful of Reeds." The succession of "chiefs of men" was as follows:

1.	Acamapichtli (Handful of Reeds)	1375
2.	Huitzilihuitl (Humming Bird)	1403
3.	Chimalpopoca (Smoking Shield)	1414
4.	Izcoatzin (Obsidian Snake)	1427
5.	Montezuma I (Angry Chief)	1436
6.	Axayacatl (Face in the Water)	1464
7.	Tizoc (Wounded Leg)	1477
8.	Ahuitzotl (Water Rat)	1486
9.	Montezuma II	1502
10.	Cuitlahuatzin	1520
11.	Guatemotzin	1520

M.]

of the sixteenth century, just before the arrival of the Spaniards, the Aztec dominion reached across the continent, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and, under the bold and bloody Ahuitzotl, its arms had been carried far over the limits already noticed as defining its permanent territory, into the farthest corners of Guatemala and Nicaragua. This extent of empire, however limited in comparison with that of many other states, is truly wonderful, considering it as the acquisition of a people whose whole population and resources had so recently been comprised within the walls of their own petty city, and considering, moreover, that the conquered territory was thickly settled by various races, bred to arms like the Mexicans, and little inferior to them in social organization. The history of the Aztecs suggests some strong points of resemblance to that of the ancient Romans, not only in their military successes, but in the policy which led to them.[27]

[27] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. lib. 2.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., tom. i. lib. 2.—Boturini, Idea, p. 146.—Col. of Mendoza, Part 1, and Codex Telleriano-Remensis, apud Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Machiavelli has noticed it as one great cause of the military successes of the Romans, "that they associated themselves, in their wars, with other states, as the principal," and expresses his astonishment that a similar policy should not have been adopted by ambitious republics in later times. (See his Discorsi sopra T. Livio, lib. 2, cap. 4, apud Opere (Geneva, 1798).) This, as we have seen above, was the very course pursued by the Mexicans.

The most important contribution, of late years, to the early history of Mexico is the *Historia antigua* of the Lic. Don. Mariano Veytia, published in the city of Mexico, in 1836. This scholar was born of an ancient and highly respectable family at Puebla, 1718. After finishing his academic education, he went to Spain, where he was kindly received at court. He afterwards visited several other countries of Europe, made himself acquainted with their languages,

and returned home well stored with the fruits of a discriminating observation and diligent study. The rest of his life he devoted to letters; especially to the illustration of the national history and antiquities. As the executor of the unfortunate Boturini, with whom he had contracted an intimacy in Madrid, he obtained access to his valuable collection of manuscripts in Mexico, and from them, and every other source which his position in society and his eminent character opened to him, he composed various works, none of which, however, except the one before us, has been admitted to the honors of the press. The time of his death is not given by his editor, but it was probably not later than 1780.

Veytia's history covers the whole period from the first occupation of Anahuac to the middle of the fifteenth century, at which point his labors were unfortunately terminated by his death. In the early portion he has endeavored to trace the migratory movements and historical annals of the principal races who entered the country. Every page bears testimony to the extent and fidelity of his researches; and, if we feel but moderate confidence in the results, the fault is not imputable to him, so much as to the dark and doubtful nature of the subject. As he descends to later ages, he is more occupied with the fortunes of the Tezcucan than with those of the Aztec dynasty, which have been amply discussed by others of his countrymen. The premature close of his labors prevented him, probably, from giving that attention to the domestic institutions of the people he describes, to which they are entitled as the most important subject of inquiry to the historian. The deficiency has been supplied by his judicious editor, Orteaga, from other sources. In the early part of his work, Veytia has explained the chronological system of the Aztecs, but, like most writers preceding the accurate Gama, with indifferent success. As a critic, he certainly ranks much higher than the annalists who preceded him, and, when his own religion is not involved, shows a discriminating judgment. When it is, he betrays a full measure of the credulity which still maintains its hold on too many even of the well-informed of his countrymen. The editor of the work has given a very interesting letter from the Abbé Clavigero to Veytia, written when the former was a poor and humble exile, and in the tone of one addressing a person of high standing and literary eminence. Both were employed on the same subject. The writings of the poor abbé, published again and again, and translated into various languages, have spread his fame throughout Europe; while the name of Veytia, whose works have been locked up in their primitive manuscript, is scarcely known beyond the boundaries of Mexico.

[The opinions set forth by Mr. Prescott respecting the Mexican empire were attacked with much vigor by Lewis H. Morgan. Mr. Morgan demonstrated conclusively that many of those opinions were erroneous. But, as Payne says in his History of the New World called America, vol i. p. 306, "his results cannot be regarded

as satisfactory, much less as final." The Spanish chroniclers Prescott consulted were correct ordinarily in their statement of facts, but were misleading in their conclusions because of their inability to comprehend the Aztec institutions.

On the pueblo as the unit of aboriginal history, see Payne, vol. i. pp. 36–47.

In his Ancient Society, p. 186, Mr. Morgan says: "The histories of Spanish America may be trusted in whatever relates to the acts of the Spaniards, and to the acts and personal characteristics of the Indians; in whatever relates to their weapons, implements and utensils, fabrics, food and raiment, and things of a similar character. But in whatever relates to Indian society and government, their social relations and plan of life, they are nearly worthless, because they learned nothing and knew nothing of either. We are at full liberty to reject them in these respects and commence anew, using any facts they may contain which harmonize with what is known of Indian society." He does not, however, always observe his own rules if those rules seem to militate against the thesis he is endeavoring to establish. Moreover, he is so dogmatic in his statements and so confident in the infallibility of his own judgment, that the reader who is seeking simply to ascertain the truth about the whole matter is oftentimes intensely exasperated with him. This is especially true with respect to the famous essay on "Montezuma's Dinner," where he writes almost as though he had been a guest at the banquet and had partaken of the viands which were there consumed. As Mr. Morgan may justly be regarded as the founder of a school, it is well to state his views at length.

According to him, then, there was no kingdom or empire of Mexico. There was simply a confederacy of three tribes, and this confederacy was a military democracy. The governmental powers were vested in a council of chiefs with a general commander. The council exercised all civil power, the military power being left in the hands of the war chief. There were no feudal castles inhabited by lawless lords. There were only great communal houses tenanted by clans.

In his brilliant work on Ancient Society, Mr. Morgan places below civilization two stages of development—savagery and barbarism. The invention of pottery marks the difference between these two stages. The savage makes no pottery. When the women of the savage tribes used vessels of fire-hardened clay for boiling their food they had passed into the first stage of barbarism. Elsewhere there were pastoral stages of development. In North America there were none. The only domesticated animal its inhabitants possessed when the Europeans landed on the continent was the dog. The first stage of barbarism in North America was marked by the cultivation of maize or Indian corn. This grain can be cultivated more easily than any other cereal. No other yields such enormous returns. In virgin soil it is only necessary to drop

the seed into the earth. Nature cares for its complete development. But virgin soil becomes exhausted in a few years. As population becomes denser and migrations cease to be practicable, the land must be more carefully tilled, and, where rains are comparatively infrequent, must be irrigated. Irrigation and the use of adobe (sun-dried brick) and stone in building mark the beginning of the second period of barbarism. In this period also tools of stone give place to those of metal, the metal used in America being copper. The Aztecs, the Mayas, and, in South America, the Peruvians were in the second period. But to the third period, when the smelting of iron ore was invented, these people never passed.

The invention of a phonetic alphabet and the use of written records, Mr. Morgan thinks, mark the beginning of civilization. But, as John Fiske points out, it will not do to insist too narrowly upon the phonetic alphabet. Hieroglyphics have perpetuated much historic record in Egypt and China. Although the Mexicans and Central Americans did not smelt iron ore, they yet possessed historic records in their hieroglyphics (hieroglyphics which may still be read). They were then enjoying civilization of an extremely rude type, combined with a marvellously developed barbarism. For though their barbarism was marked by human sacrifices and by cannibalism, yet, according to testimony which Mr. Morgan says may be taken at its face value, these barbarians had pleasure-gardens and fountains, baths, menageries, feather-work that was marvellously beautiful, pottery that showed admirable taste, vessels of gold and silver, and many other accessories of an advanced civilization.

Mr. Morgan was adopted into the Seneca tribe of North American Indians, and he was able to study Indian institutions from an inside point of view. Unquestionably he had a more profound knowledge of those institutions than any other scholar of his time. But he went too far when he confined the Aztecs to the narrow limits in development to which the Senecas had attained. Moreover, he does not make due allowance for the changes in development which the more favorable climate of the Mexican table-lands brought about. The "long house" of the Iroquois may have been constructed on the same general plan, but it could hardly have been mistaken for the building in which Montezuma quartered Cortés and his allies. The one meal, freshly cooked and eaten about midday, bore but little resemblance to the banquets in Mexico described with such watery appreciation by the Spanish chroniclers. (Morgan admits that these same chroniclers may be trusted when they write of food and other such palpable matters.)

But Mr. Morgan is unquestionably right in saying that Montezuma's so-called "empire" was really a confederacy of tribes—living in pueblos, governed by a council of chiefs, and levying tribute upon other pueblos. The Aztec confederacy dominated the Mexican land as the Iroquois confederacy dominated the region between the Connecticut and the Mississippi. To assert that otherwise the

two nations were alike both in their institutions and in their development is as unwarranted as to say that the governmental institutions and the political development of the United States and Venezuela are identical.

How did this confederacy come to be formed?

The earliest family group was the clan. As Sir Henry Maine points out in his Ancient Law, the individual was nothing in ancient society, the state was nothing, the family was everything. This statement holds good everywhere, for America as well as for India. A group of clans made up a phratry or brotherhood; a group of phratries made a tribe. This threefold grouping was universal. The Greek phratry, the Roman curia, the Teutonic hundred were analogous institutions. In the clans kinship was always derived through the female line. The *Mutterrecht* everywhere prevailed.*

μήτηρ μεύ τ' ἐμέ ψησι Του ἔμμεναι ἄντὰρ ἐγωγε
οὐκ οἰδ, ὀυ γαρ πώ τις ἑον γόνον ἀυτὸς ἀνέγνω
Odyssey, I, 215–6.

In that middle stage of barbarism when men began to acquire property, when warriors of valor converted to their uses what had once been common property,—herds of cattle, wives, etc.,—when polygamy became a custom, kinship came to be reckoned through the male line. In this way relationship was mightily changed. But in aboriginal America where domesticated animals were unknown this change did not take place as early as it did elsewhere. In Mexico the change did not probably come much before the century of the Conquest. Kinship was through females only. The exogamous clan (the system which required that the spouse should be taken from another clan) was the unit of the social structure, not the family.

House life found expression in architecture. One underlying principle was everywhere apparent—namely, adaptation to communal living. Gradations in culture were evident from the buildings.* Thus, the "long house" of the Iroquois, from fifty to one hundred feet long, divided into compartments every six or eight feet, and roughly constructed from timber and bark, betokened very different conditions from those which prevailed among the pueblos of the Zuñi Indians, with their immense structures of adobe and of stone.

In the communal house woman ruled. To her belonged the personal property. Because it was derived through her, this property remained always with the exogamous clan. Thus, marriage made very little difference to woman's maintenance. If the husband who had come into the house proved to be lazy and otherwise worthless, divorce was easy, and he was sent back to his own.

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* [This subject Mr. Morgan treats with a master's hand in his Houses and House Life of the American Aborigines.]

From its own members the clan elected a sachem to attend to civil matters, and a chief to direct its military affairs.

The son could not succeed his father in these offices, but a brother might succeed a brother. (This was true of the Indian tribe to which Powhatan belonged. Had James I of England been aware of this fact, he would not have looked with such jealous eyes upon his subject Rolfe who had married the Indian princess Pocahontas.) The clan was always known by some distinctive name, usually that of some animal—beaver, fox, wolf, etc.

When the clan became so large as to be unwieldy, it split up into phratries. The "phratry" was at first a religious and social organization; and one of its chief duties was the prosecution of criminals. (The Teutonic hundred was ever ready to exact "wehrgeld.") "The tribe" was usually the highest attainment in organization of which the aborigines of America were capable. The Mexican confederacy was the most interesting and important of their permanent organizations. The Spaniards did not understand the principles on which this confederacy was founded, because it was entirely unlike anything with which they were familiar.—M.]

CHAPTER II

SUCCESSION TO THE CROWN—AZTEC NOBILITY—JUDICIAL SYSTEM—LAWS AND REVENUES—MILITARY INSTITUTIONS

THE form of government differed in the different states of Anahuac. With the Aztecs and Tezcucans it was monarchical and nearly absolute. The two nations resembled each other so much in their political institutions that one of their historians has remarked, in too unqualified a manner indeed, that what is told of one may be always understood as applying to the other.[1] I shall direct my inquiries to the Mexican polity, borrowing an illustration occasionally from that of the rival kingdom.*

[1] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.

* [Robertson, in his History of America, was the first man to question the correctness of the judgment passed by the Spanish chroniclers upon the Aztec institutions. Subsequent American writers gave louder expression to his doubts. As has been said in the notes upon the preceding chapter, Mr. Morgan proved conclusively that the so-called "empire" was no empire at all, but only a confederacy of three tribes. Mr. Morgan, however, was sometimes led into inaccuracy and extravagance of statement because of his desire to place all the American aborigines on the same institutional plane.

Adolf Bandelier, pupil and disciple of Morgan, persevering and accurate scholar, investigated the subject in an entirely unpreju-

The government was an elective monarchy. Four of the principal nobles, who had been chosen by their own body in the preceding reign, filled the

diced way and with a thoroughness which forces men to place almost implicit confidence in his conclusions. It is well here to summarize those conclusions.

The Mexican confederacy was made up of three tribes, the Aztecs, the Tezcucans, and the Tlacopans, who dwelt in neighboring pueblos. Of these tribes the Aztecs and Tezcucans were superior to the Tlacopans. Spoils of war were always divided into five portions. The Tlacopans took one, their allies shared equally the other four parts. The Indian pueblos generally were designed to withstand a protracted siege, but the Mexican pueblos were almost impregnable. It is not likely that any other Indian tribes could have captured them. Dwelling securely in these great communal houses, which were also fortresses, the Aztec confederacy held many other tribes in subjection. It was only necessary for it to send its agents to other pueblos to secure at once the specified tribute. Failure to pay this tribute brought summary punishment at the hands of the warriors of the confederacy. The "empire" was "only a partnership formed for the purpose of carrying on the business of warfare, and that intended, not for the extension of territorial ownership, but only for an increase of the means of subsistence." The subject peoples were never incorporated into the confederacy. The tribe remained intact. The houses the tribe occupied were common property, and so was the land cultivated. Neither land nor houses could be sold, and as the tribe increased in numbers new communal houses were built to accommodate the increase. The great fortress-dwellings in a, for savages, well-cultivated land prevented the subdivision of tribes which was constantly taking place in wilder North America.

Twenty clans, organized into four phratries, made up of the Aztec tribe. The clans were called "calpullis." They were governed by a council of chiefs, "tecuhtli," elected by the clan. There was an official head, the "calpullac," whose duties were mainly civil, and also a military leader, the "ohcacautin" ("elder brother"). Painful religious ordeals accompanied the initiation of these men into office. Clan officers held their places during good behavior. Medicine-men, or priests, were members of the clan council. To the four phratries into which the clan was divided four quarters of the city of Mexico, each under its own captain, were assigned. Their titles were "man of the house of darts," "chief of the eagle and cactus," "blood-shedder," and "cutter of men." Of these captains the "chief of the eagle and cactus" was chief executioner. Their principal duty was to maintain order both within and without

office of electors, to whom were added, with merely an honorary rank, however, the two royal allies of Tezcuco and Tlacopan. The sovereign was se-

the pueblo. In each of these four quarters was an armory ("house of darts"), in which the weapons of the phratry were kept when its warriors were not engaged in warfare. The phratry was in Mexico primarily a military organization.

Twenty members, one from each clan, made up the tribal council which exercised supreme control over the Aztec tribe. The member who was chosen to represent the clan was called "tlatoani," the "speaker," and the council was called "tlatocan," the "place of speech." Sessions of the council were regularly held every ten days, and every eighty days an extra session was convened, to which the twenty "ohcacautins," the four captains of the phratries, the two civil executives of the tribe, and some others were summoned. Its decisions were final.

As the clan had its civil head, or calpullac, so the tribe had a corresponding officer, the cihuacoatl, or "female snake." The "snake woman" was always a man. He was chief judge of the clan and was elected for life by the tribal council. The "snake woman" was second in command to the "chief of men," or tlacatecuhtli, the head war chief. While at first head war chief of the Aztecs, about the year 1430 the tlacatecuhtli was made head war chief and commander of the confederacy. Montezuma was "chief of men," and the Spaniards saw him surrounded with such state that they not unnaturally supposed him to be king of the Aztecs. Montezuma's position, however, was not at all that of a king, and most of the royal functions fell to the lot of the "snake woman." Bandelier thinks the "chief of men" was only the chief military officer. He was elected by the "elder brothers" (ohcacautins) of the clans, the tribal council, and the leading priests, sitting in assembly. A principle of succession seems to have confined the election to members of a special clan. Moreover, from four officers—namely, a member of the priesthood called the "man of the dark house," and the phratry captains called respectively "man of the house of darts," "blood-shedder," and "cutter of men"—the "chief of men" was always chosen. He exercised certain priestly functions after his election. His first official act was to offer incense to the war god Huitzilopochtli.* Montezuma was "priest commander" as well as "chief of men."

The "chief of men" held office during good behavior. He was, ex officio, a member of the tribal council, but he had little to do within the tribe limits. His functions were exercised outside the confederacy, and his special duty was to superintend the collection

* [Bancroft, Native Races of the Pacific States, vol. ii. p. 145.]

lected from the brothers of the deceased prince, or, in default of them, from his nephews. Thus the election was always restricted to the same fam-

of tribute. His agents, called "crop-gatherers" (calpixqui), were appointed by the tribal council. It was their duty to visit the subject pueblos and to gather the tribute—maize, weapons, pottery, feather-work, female slaves, victims for sacrifice, or anything else which suited the victor's fancy. The prisoners were forced to carry the other tribute to the tecpan, or tribal house, and were accompanied by couriers who saw that the tribute was duly delivered according to the directions given in picture-writing by the "crop-gatherers." The office of calpixqui was most dangerous, being practically that of spy. All these institutions the Spanish historians noted without understanding. They supposed that there was a standing army; but every male was born a warrior, and so the people were the army. There was no nobility of any kind in Mexico. Merit alone determined the appointment to office. "No office whatever, no kind of dignity, was among the Mexicans transmissible by inheritance."

Above the common warriors of the clan were two higher classes, the "distinguished braves" and the war chiefs proper. Among the "distinguished braves" were three classes, arranged according to attainments, none of the braves being elected, but all winning their place by valor. The war chiefs were elected. The "snake woman," or "female snake," acted as a check upon the head war chief, or "chief of men." The two alternately took charge of forays. The elaborate decorations which adorned the "chief of men" in his official capacity may be seen represented in the sculptures at Palenque, especially upon the "tablet of the cross."

The Aztecs conducted no long campaigns, and were not successful in protracted sieges, while they were always able to make a successful defence against enemies of their own class. Their pyramidal temples—teocalli—were admirable fortresses. In Mexico itself the causeways were essentially military constructions, and not simply roads to connect the city with the mainland. Captives taken in forays were "collared," that is, they were secured by wooden collars fastened upon their necks. If they were specially unruly, and were continually striving to escape, the tendons of their feet were cut.

As the tribes increased new "calpullis" were formed and new communal houses were built. The Spaniards took it for granted that the tribal government which exercised authority over tribal soil could alienate that soil, but this was not the case. It was not until communal soil was done away with that private ownership was established.

ily. The candidate preferred must have distinguished himself in war, though, as in the case of the last Montezuma, he were a member of the priesthood.[2] This singular mode of supplying the throne had some advantages. The candidates received an education which fitted them for the royal dignity, while the age at which they were chosen not only secured the nation against the evils of minority, but afforded ample means for estimating their qualifications for the office. The result, at all events, was favorable; since the throne, as already noticed, was filled by a succession of able princes, well qualified to rule over a warlike and ambitious people. The scheme of election, how-

[2] This was an exception.—In Egypt, also, the king was frequently taken from the warrior caste, though obliged afterwards to be instructed in the mysteries of the priesthood: *ὁ δὲ ἐκ μαχίμων ἀποδεδειγμένος εὐθὺς ἐγίνετο τῶν ἱέρων.* Plutarch, de Isid. et Osir., sec. 9.

Mr. Bandelier reaches the following conclusions:

1. Abstract ownership either by the state or the individual was unknown.
2. Right of possession was vested in the kin, or clan. The idea of alienation was never entertained.
3. Individuals only held the right to use certain lots.
4. No rights of possession were attached to any office or chieftaincy.
5. For tribal business certain lands were set apart independent of persons.
6. Conquest was followed not by annexation or apportionment, but by tribute.
7. Feudalism could not prevail under these conditions.

Of the kin, or clan, it should be noted that, first, the kin claimed the right to name its members; second, it was the duty of the kin to educate its members; third, it was accustomed to regulate marriage; fourth, one attribute of the kin was the right of common burial; fifth, the kin had to protect its members; sixth, it exercised the right of electing its officers and of deposing them. (Montezuma, "chief of men," was deposed before he died.)—M.]

ever defective, argues a more refined and calculating policy than was to have been expected from a barbarous nation.[3]

The new monarch * was installed in his regal dignity with much parade of religious ceremony, but not until, by a victorious campaign, he had obtained a sufficient number of captives to grace his triumphal entry into the capital and to furnish victims for the dark and bloody rites which stained the Aztec superstition. Amidst this pomp of human sacrifice he was crowned. The crown, resembling a mitre in its form, and curiously ornamented with gold, gems, and feathers, was placed on his head by the lord of Tezcuco, the most powerful of his royal allies. The title of *King,* by which the earlier Aztec princes are distinguished by Spanish writers, is supplanted by that of *Emperor* in the later reigns, intimating, perhaps, his superiority over the confederated monarchies of Tlacopan and Tezcuco.[4]

The Aztec princes, especially towards the close of the dynasty, lived in a barbaric pomp, truly Ori-

[3] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 18; lib. 11, cap. 27.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 112.—Acosta, Naturall and Morall Historie of the East and West Indies, Eng. trans. (London, 1604).—According to Zurita, an election by the nobles took place only in default of heirs of the deceased monarch. (Rapport, p. 15.) The minute historical investigation of Clavigero may be permitted to outweigh this general assertion.

[4] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 9, 10, 14; lib. 8, cap. 31, 34.—See, also, Zurita, Rapport, pp. 20–23.—Ixtlilxochitl stoutly claims this supremacy for his own nation. (Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 34.) His assertions are at variance with facts stated by himself elsewhere, and are not countenanced by any other writer whom I have consulted.

* ["Chief of men."—M.]

ental. Their spacious palaces * were provided with halls for the different councils who aided the monarch in the transaction of business. The chief of these was a sort of privy council, composed in part, probably, of the four electors chosen by the nobles after the accession, whose places, when made vacant by death, were immediately supplied as before. It was the business of this body, so far as can be gathered from the very loose accounts given of it, to advise the king, in respect to the government of the provinces, the administration of the revenues, and, indeed, on all great matters of public interest.[5]

In the royal buildings were accommodations, also, for a numerous body-guard † of the sovereign, made up of the chief nobility. It is not easy to determine with precision, in these barbarian governments, the limits of the several orders. It is certain there was a distinct class of nobles, with large landed possessions, who held the most impor-

[5] Sahagun, who places the elective power in a much larger body, speaks of four senators, who formed a state council. (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 30.) Acosta enlarges the council beyond the number of the electors. (Lib. 6, ch. 26.) No two writers agree.

* [The spacious palace in which the "chief of men" lived was the chief communal house of the clan. The "privy council" was made up of the clan officers specified on page 33.—M.]

† [There was, according to Bandelier, no such thing as a "body-guard." Guards were unknown. This was evidenced when Montezuma was captured. No "body-guard" attempted his rescue. Bandelier's conclusions should be kept steadily in mind in reading this chapter. The "distinct class of nobles, with large landed possessions," were only the principal officers of the tribe, who were of course of the same "kin" as the so-called Aztec monarch. The great caciques, with thousands of vassals, were tribal officers leading tribal warriors. The "estates" were all held by the tribe, and were all subject to tribute.—M.]

tant offices near the person of the prince, and engrossed the administration of the provinces and cities.[6] Many of these could trace their descent from the founders of the Aztec monarchy. According to some writers of authority, there were thirty great *caciques,* who had their residence, at least a part of the year, in the capital, and who could muster a hundred thousand vassals each on their estates.[7] Without relying on such wild statements, it is clear, from the testimony of the Conquerors, that the country was occupied by numerous powerful chieftains, who lived like independent princes on their domains. If it be true that the kings encouraged, or, indeed, exacted, the residence of these nobles in the capital, and required hostages in their absence, it is evident that their power must have been very formidable.[8]

Their estates appear to have been held by various tenures, and to have been subject to different restrictions. Some of them, earned by their own good swords or received as the recompense of public services, were held without any limitation,

[6] Zurita enumerates four orders of chiefs, all of whom were exempted from imposts and enjoyed very considerable privileges. He does not discriminate the several ranks with much precision. Rapport, p. 47, et seq.

[7] See, in particular, Herrera, Historia general de los Hechos de los Castellanos en las Islas y Tierra firme del Mar Océano (Madrid, 1730), dec. 2, lib. 8, cap. 12.

[8] Carta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 110.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 89; lib. 14, cap. 6.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 121.—Zurita, Rapport, pp. 48, 65.—Ixtlilxochitl (Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 34) speaks of thirty great feudal chiefs, some of them Tezcucan and Tlacopan, whom he styles "grandees of the empire"! He says nothing of the great *tail* of 100,000 vassals to each, mentioned by Torquemada and Herrera.

except that the possessors could not dispose of them to a plebeian.[9] Others were entailed on the eldest male issue, and, in default of such, reverted to the crown. Most of them seem to have been burdened with the obligation of military service. The principal chiefs of Tezcuco, according to its chronicler, were expressly obliged to support their prince with their armed vassals, to attend his court, and aid him in the council. Some, instead of these services, were to provide for the repairs of his buildings, and to keep the royal demesnes in order, with an annual offering, by way of homage, of fruits and flowers. It was usual, if we are to believe historians, for a new king, on his accession, to confirm the investiture of estates derived from the crown.[10]

It cannot be denied that we recognize, in all this, several features of the feudal system,* which, no

[9] *Macehual,*—a word equivalent to the French word *roturier.* Nor could fiefs originally be held by plebeians in France. See Hallam's Middle Ages (London, 1819), vol. ii. p. 207.

[10] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., ubi supra.—Zurita, Rapport, ubi supra.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 122–124.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 7.—Gomara, Crónica de Nueva-España, cap. 199, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Boturini (Idea, p. 165) carries back the origin of *fiefs* in Anahuac to the twelfth century. Carli says, "Le système politique y étoit féodal." In the next page he tells us, "Personal merit alone made the distinction of the nobility"! (Lettres Américaines, trad. Fr. (Paris, 1788), tom. i. let. 11.) Carli was a writer of a lively imagination.

* [There was no such thing as feudalism among the Aztecs. There could not be where the communism which the clan system implies prevailed. Feudalism was a social-political system based upon land. Under it there was a well-defined gradation of ranks, and each lower was bound to the next higher order by protection given in return for service rendered. Moreover, where feudalism prevailed the ownership of the land was vested in one person while the occu-

doubt, lose nothing of their effect under the hands of the Spanish writers, who are fond of tracing analogies to European institutions. But such analogies lead sometimes to very erroneous conclusions. The obligation of military service, for instance, the most essential principle of a fief, seems to be naturally demanded by every government from its subjects. As to minor points of resemblance, they fall far short of that harmonious system of reciprocal service and protection which embraced, in nice gradation, every order of a feudal monarchy. The kingdoms of Anahuac were in their nature despotic, attended, indeed, with many mitigating circumstances unknown to the despotisms of the East; but it is chimerical to look for much in common—beyond a few accidental forms and ceremonies—with those aristocratic institutions of the Middle Ages which made the court of every petty baron the precise image in miniature of that of his sovereign.

The legislative power, both in Mexico and Tezcuco, resided wholly with the monarch.* This feature of despotism, however, was in some measure counteracted by the constitution of the judicial tribunals,—of more importance, among a rude

pancy belonged to another. Feudalism exalted the individual and assured to each man his *rights*. The clan knew nothing whatever of individual rights. When the conception of personal ownership was developed, and kinship ceased to be the bond which held men together, the clan system of communal living of necessity passed away. But among the Aztecs the feudal conception of personal property never was developed. The Spaniards, knowing no civilization but their own, naturally supposed that the Aztec institutions were similar to the Spanish, and historians generally accepted that view.—M.]

* [See summary of Bandelier's studies, p. 36.—M.]

people, than the legislative, since it is easier to make good laws for such a community than to enforce them, and the best laws, badly administered, are but a mockery. Over each of the principal cities, with its dependent territories, was placed a supreme judge, appointed by the crown, with original and final jurisdiction in both civil and criminal cases. There was no appeal from his sentence to any other tribunal, nor even to the king. He held his office during life; and any one who usurped his ensigns was punished with death.[11]

Below this magistrate was a court, established in each province, and consisting of three members. It held concurrent jurisdiction with the supreme judge in civil suits, but in criminal an appeal lay to his tribunal. Besides these courts, there was a body of inferior magistrates, distributed through the country, chosen by the people themselves in their several districts. Their authority was limited to smaller causes, while the more important were carried up to the higher courts. There was still another class of subordinate officers, appointed also by the people, each of whom was to watch over the

[11] This magistrate, who was called *cihuacoatl,** was also to audit the accounts of the collectors of the taxes in his district. (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 127.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 11, cap. 25.) The Mendoza Collection contains a painting of the courts of justice under Montezuma, who introduced great changes in them. (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i., Plate 70.) According to the interpreter, an appeal lay from them, in certain cases, to the king's council. Ibid., vol. vi. p. 79.

* [This word, a compound of *cihuatl,* woman, and *coatl,* serpent, was the name of a divinity, the mythical mother of the human species. Its typical application may have had reference to justice, or law, as the source of social order.—K.]

conduct of a certain number of families and report any disorder or breach of the laws to the higher authorities.[12]

In Tezcuco the judicial arrangements were of a more refined character;[13] and a gradation of tribunals finally terminated in a general meeting or parliament, consisting of all the judges, great and petty, throughout the kingdom, held every eighty days in the capital, over which the king presided in person. This body determined all suits which, from their importance or difficulty, had been reserved for its consideration by the lower tribunals. It served, moreover, as a council of state, to assist the monarch in the transaction of public business.[14]

Such are the vague and imperfect notices that can be gleaned, respecting the Aztec tribunals, from the hieroglyphical paintings still preserved, and from the most accredited Spanish writers.

[12] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 127, 128.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.—In this arrangement of the more humble magistrates we are reminded of the Anglo-Saxon hundreds and tithings, especially the latter, the members of which were to watch over the conduct of the families in their districts and bring the offenders to justice. The hard penalty of mutual responsibility was not known to the Mexicans.

[13] Zurita, so temperate, usually, in his language, remarks that, in the capital, "Tribunals were instituted which might compare in their organization with the royal audiences of Castile." (Rapport, p. 93.) His observations are chiefly drawn from the Tezcucan courts, which in their forms of procedure, he says, were like the Aztec. (Loc. cit.)

[14] Boturini, Idea, p. 87.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 11, cap. 26.—Zurita compares this body to the Castilian córtes. It would seem, however, according to him, to have consisted only of twelve principal judges, besides the king. His meaning is somewhat doubtful. (Rapport, pp. 94, 101, 106.) M. de Humboldt, in his account of the Aztec courts, has confounded them with the Tezcucan. Comp. Vues des Cordillères et Monumens des Peuples indigènes de l'Amérique (Paris, 1810), p. 55, and Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 128, 129.

These, being usually ecclesiastics, have taken much less interest in this subject than in matters connected with religion. They find some apology, certainly, in the early destruction of most of the Indian paintings, from which their information was, in part, to be gathered.

On the whole, however, it must be inferred that the Aztecs were sufficiently civilized to evince a solicitude for the rights both of property and of persons. The law, authorizing an appeal to the highest judicature in criminal matters only, shows an attention to personal security, rendered the more obligatory by the extreme severity of their penal code, which would naturally have made them more cautious of a wrong conviction. The existence of a number of co-ordinate tribunals, without a central one of supreme authority to control the whole, must have given rise to very discordant interpretations of the law in different districts. But this is an evil which they shared in common with most of the nations of Europe.

The provision for making the superior judges wholly independent of the crown was worthy of an enlightened people. It presented the strongest barrier that a mere constitution could afford against tyranny. It is not, indeed, to be supposed that, in a government otherwise so despotic, means could not be found for influencing the magistrate. But it was a great step to fence round his authority with the sanction of the law; and no one of the Aztec monarchs, so far as I know, is accused of an attempt to violate it.

To receive presents or a bribe, to be guilty of

collusion in any way with a suitor, was punished, in a judge, with death. Who, or what tribunal, decided as to his guilt, does not appear. In Tezcuco this was done by the rest of the court. But the king presided over that body. The Tezcucan prince Nezahualpilli, who rarely tempered justice with mercy, put one judge to death for taking a bribe, and another for determining suits in his own house,—a capital offence, also, by law.[15]

The judges of the higher tribunals were maintained from the produce of a part of the crown lands, reserved for this purpose. They, as well as the supreme judge, held their offices for life. The proceedings in the courts were conducted with decency and order. The judges wore an appropriate dress, and attended to business both parts of the day, dining always, for the sake of despatch, in an apartment of the same building where they held their session; a method of proceeding much commended by the Spanish chroniclers, to whom despatch was not very familiar in their own tribunals. Officers attended to preserve order, and others summoned the parties and produced them in court. No counsel was employed; the parties stated their own case and supported it by their witnesses. The oath of the accused was also admitted in evidence.* The statement of the case, the testimony, and the proceedings of the trial were

[15] "If this should be done now, what an excellent thing it would be!" exclaims Sahagun's Mexican editor. Hist. de Nueva-España, tom. ii. p. 304, nota.—Zurita, Rapport, p. 102.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 67.

* [There is a hint here of the "Compurgators" of the Germanic tribes.—M.]

all set forth by a clerk, in hieroglyphical paintings, and handed over to the court. The paintings were executed with so much accuracy that in all suits respecting real property they were allowed to be produced as good authority in the Spanish tribunals, very long after the Conquest; and a chair for their study and interpretation was established at Mexico in 1553, which has long since shared the fate of most other provisions for learning in that unfortunate country.[16]

A capital sentence was indicated by a line traced with an arrow across the portrait of the accused. In Tezcuco, where the king presided in the court, this, according to the national chronicler, was done with extraordinary parade. His description, which is of rather a poetical cast, I give in his own words. " In the royal palace of Tezcuco was a court-yard, on the opposite sides of which were two halls of justice. In the principal one, called the ' tribunal of God,' was a throne of pure gold, inlaid with turquoises and other precious stones. On a stool in front was placed a human skull, crowned with an immense emerald of a pyramidal form, and surmounted by an aigrette of brilliant plumes and precious stones. The skull was laid on a heap of military weapons, shields, quivers, bows, and arrows. The walls were hung with tapestry, made of the hair of different wild animals, of rich and

[16] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 95, 100, 103.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, loc. cit.—Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, pp. 55, 56.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 11, cap. 25.—Clavigero says the accused might free himself by oath: "il reo poteva purgarsi col giuramento." (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 129.) What rogue, then, could ever have been convicted?

various colors, festooned by gold rings and embroidered with figures of birds and flowers. Above the throne was a canopy of variegated plumage, from the centre of which shot forth resplendent rays of gold and jewels. The other tribunal, called 'the King's,' was also surmounted by a gorgeous canopy of feathers, on which were emblazoned the royal arms. Here the sovereign gave public audience and communicated his despatches. But when he decided important causes, or confirmed a capital sentence, he passed to the 'tribunal of God,' attended by the fourteen great lords of the realm, marshalled according to their rank. Then, putting on his mitred crown, incrusted with precious stones, and holding a golden arrow, by way of sceptre, in his left hand, he laid his right upon the skull, and pronounced judgment." [17] All this looks rather fine for a court of justice, it must be owned. But it is certain that the Tezcucans, as we shall see hereafter, possessed both the materials and the skill requisite to work them up in this manner. Had they been a little further advanced in refinement, one might well doubt their having the bad taste to do so.

The laws of the Aztecs were registered, and exhibited to the people, in their hieroglyphical paintings. Much the larger part of them, as in every nation imperfectly civilized, relates rather to the security of persons than of property.* The great

[17] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.—These various objects had a symbolical meaning, according to Boturini, Idea, p. 84.

* [Compare the "codes" of the Germanic races.—M.]

crimes against society were all made capital. Even the murder of a slave was punished with death. Adulterers, as among the Jews, were stoned to death. Thieving, according to the degree of the offence, was punished by slavery or death. Yet the Mexicans could have been under no great apprehension of this crime, since the entrances to their dwellings were not secured by bolts or fastenings of any kind. It was a capital offence to remove the boundaries of another's lands; to alter the established measures; and for a guardian not to be able to give a good account of his ward's property. These regulations evince a regard for equity in dealings, and for private rights, which argues a considerable progress in civilization. Prodigals, who squandered their patrimony, were punished in like manner; a severe sentence, since the crime brought its adequate punishment along with it. Intemperance, which was the burden, moreover, of their religious homilies, was visited with the severest penalties; as if they had foreseen in it the consuming canker of their own as well as of the other Indian races in later times. It was punished in the young with death, and in older persons with loss of rank and confiscation of property. Yet a decent conviviality was not meant to be proscribed at their festivals, and they possessed the means of indulging it, in a mild fermented liquor, called *pulque,* which is still popular, not only with the Indian, but the European population of the country.[18]

[18] Paintings of the Mendoza Collection, Pl. 72, and Interpretation, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 87.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind.,

The rites of marriage were celebrated with as much formality as in any Christian country; and the institution was held in such reverence that a tribunal was instituted for the sole purpose of determining questions relating to it. Divorces could not be obtained until authorized by a sentence of this court, after a patient hearing of the parties.

But the most remarkable part of the Aztec code was that relating to slavery. There were several descriptions of slaves: prisoners taken in war, who were almost always reserved for the dreadful doom of sacrifice; criminals, public debtors, persons who, from extreme poverty, voluntarily resigned their freedom, and children who were sold by their own parents. In the last instance, usually occasioned also by poverty, it was common for the parents, with the master's consent, to substitute others of their children successively, as they grew up; thus distributing the burden as equally as possible among the different members of the family. The willingness of freemen to incur the penalties of this condition is explained by the mild form in which it existed. The contract of sale was executed in the presence of at least four witnesses.

lib. 12, cap. 7.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 130–134.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—They could scarcely have been an intemperate people, with these heavy penalties hanging over them. Indeed, Zurita bears testimony that those Spaniards who thought they were greatly erred. (Rapport, p. 112.) M. Ternaux's translation of a passage of the Anonymous Conqueror, "aucun peuple n'est aussi sobre" (Recueil de Pièces relatives à la Conquête du Mexique, ap. Voyages, etc. (Paris, 1838), p. 54), may give a more favorable impression, however, than that intended by his original, whose remark is confined to abstemiousness in eating. See the Relatione, ap. Ramusio, Raccolta delle Navigationi et Viaggi (Venetia, 1554–1565).

The services to be exacted were limited with great precision. The slave was allowed to have his own family, to hold property, and even other slaves. His children were free. No one could be born to slavery in Mexico;[19] an honorable distinction, not known, I believe, in any civilized community where slavery has been sanctioned.[20] Slaves were not sold by their masters, unless when these were driven to it by poverty. They were often liberated by them at their death, and sometimes, as there was no natural repugnance founded on difference of blood and race, were married to them. Yet a refractory or vicious slave might be led into the market, with a collar round his neck,* which intimated his bad character, and there be publicly sold, and, on a second sale, reserved for sacrifice.[21]

Such are some of the most striking features of the Aztec code, to which the Tezcucan bore

[19] In ancient Egypt the child of a slave was born free, if the father were free. (Diodorus, Bibl. Hist., lib. 1, sec. 80.) This, though more liberal than the code of most countries, fell short of the Mexican.

[20] In Egypt the same penalty was attached to the murder of a slave as to that of a freeman. (Ibid., lib. 1, sec. 77.) Robertson speaks of a class of slaves held so cheap in the eye of the Mexican law that one might kill them with impunity. (History of America (ed. London, 1776), vol. iii. p. 164.) This, however, was not in Mexico, but in Nicaragua (see his own authority, Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 4, cap. 2), a distant country, not incorporated in the Mexican empire, and with laws and institutions very different from those of the latter.

[21] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 12, cap. 15; lib. 14, cap. 16, 17. —Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 14.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 134–136.

* [A "collared" slave was fastened at night to a wall by his wooden collar.—M.]

great resemblance.[22] With some exceptions, it is stamped with the severity, the ferocity indeed, of a rude people, hardened by familiarity with scenes of blood, and relying on physical instead of moral means for the correction of evil.[23] Still, it evinces a profound respect for the great principles of morality, and as clear a perception of these principles as is to be found in the most cultivated nations.

The royal revenues were derived from various sources. The crown lands,* which appear to have been extensive, made their returns in kind. The places in the neighborhood of the capital were bound to supply workmen and materials for building the king's palaces and keeping them in repair. They were also to furnish fuel, provisions, and whatever was necessary for his ordinary domestic expenditure, which was certainly on no stinted scale.[24] The principal cities, which had numerous villages and a large territory dependent on them, were distributed into districts, with each a share

[22] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 38, and Relaciones, MS.—The Tezcucan code, indeed, as digested under the great Nezahualcoyotl, formed the basis of the Mexican, in the latter days of the empire. Zurita, Rapport, p. 95.

[23] In this, at least, they did not resemble the Romans; of whom their countryman could boast, "Gloriari licet, nulli gentium mitiores placuisse pœnas." Livy, Hist., lib. 1, cap. 28.

[24] The Tezcucan revenues were, in like manner, paid in the produce of the country. The various branches of the royal expenditure were defrayed by specified towns and districts; and the whole arrangements here, and in Mexico, bore a remarkable resemblance to the financial regulations of the Persian empire, as reported by the Greek writers (see Herodotus, Clio, sec. 192); with this difference, however, that the towns of Persia proper were not burdened with tributes, like the conquered cities. Idem, Thalia, sec. 97.

* [For "crown lands" read "subject tribes"; for "king's palaces," "communal houses."—M.]

of the lands allotted to it, for its support. The inhabitants paid a stipulated part of the produce to the crown. The vassals of the great chiefs, also, paid a portion of their earnings into the public treasury; an arrangement not at all in the spirit of the feudal institutions.[25]

In addition to this tax on all the agricultural produce of the kingdom, there was another on its manufactures. The nature and the variety of the tributes will be best shown by an enumeration of some of the principal articles. These were cotton dresses, and mantles of feather-work exquisitely made; ornamented armor; vases and plates of gold; gold dust, bands and bracelets; crystal, gilt, and varnished jars and goblets; bells, arms, and utensils of copper; reams of paper; grain, fruits, copal, amber, cochineal, cacao, wild animals and birds, timber, lime, mats, etc.[26] In this curious

[25] Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 172.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 89; lib. 14, cap. 7.—Boturini, Idea, p. 166.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.—The people of the provinces were distributed into *calpulli,* or tribes, who held the lands of the neighborhood in common. Officers of their own appointment parcelled out these lands among the several families of the *calpulli;* and on the extinction or removal of a family its lands reverted to the common stock, to be again distributed. The individual proprietor had no power to alienate them. The laws regulating these matters were very precise, and had existed ever since the occupation of the country by the Aztecs. Zurita, Rapport, pp. 51–62.

[26] The following items of the tribute furnished by different cities will give a more precise idea of its nature:—20 chests of ground chocolate; 40 pieces of armor, of a particular device; 2400 loads of large mantles, of twisted cloth; 800 loads of small mantles, of rich wearing-apparel; 5 pieces of armor, of rich feathers; 60 pieces of armor, of common feathers; a chest of beans; a chest of *chian;* a chest of maize; 8000 reams of paper; likewise 2000 loaves of very white salt, refined in the shape of a mould, for the consumption only of the lords of Mexico; 8000 lumps of unrefined copal; 400 small

medley of the most homely commodities and the elegant superfluities of luxury, it is singular that no mention should be made of silver, the great staple of the country in later times, and the use of which was certainly known to the Aztecs.[27]

Garrisons were established in the larger cities,—probably those at a distance and recently conquered,—to keep down revolt, and to enforce the

baskets of white refined copal; 100 copper axes; 80 loads of red chocolate; 800 *xícaros*, out of which they drank chocolate; a little vessel of small turquoise stones; 4 chests of timber, full of maize; 4000 loads of lime; tiles of gold, of the size of an oyster, and as thick as the finger; 40 bags of cochineal; 20 bags of gold dust, of the finest quality; a diadem of gold, of a specified pattern; 20 lip-jewels of clear amber, ornamented with gold; 200 loads of chocolate; 100 pots or jars of liquid-amber; 8000 *handfuls* of rich scarlet feathers; 40 tiger-skins; 1600 bundles of cotton, etc., etc. Col. de Mendoza, part 2, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.*

[27] Mapa de Tributos, ap. Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España.—Tribute-roll, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i., and Interpretation, vol. vi., pp. 17–44.—The Mendoza Collection, in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, contains a roll of the cities of the Mexican empire, with the specific tributes exacted from them. It is a copy made after the Conquest, with a pen, on European paper. (See Foreign Quarterly Review, No. XVII. Art. 4.) An original painting of the same roll was in Boturini's museum. Lorenzana has given us engravings of it, in which the outlines of the Oxford copy are filled up, though somewhat rudely. Clavigero considers the explanations in Lorenzana's edition very inaccurate (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 25), a judgment confirmed by Aglio, who has transcribed the entire collection of the Mendoza papers, in the first volume of the Antiquities of Mexico. It would have much facilitated reference to his plates if they had been numbered;—a strange omission!

* [From those too poor to pay the regular taxes, snakes, scorpions, centipedes, and vermin were exacted. "It is related that soon after Cortés arrived in the city of Mexico certain cavaliers of his force . . . were roaming through the royal palace, . . . when they came across some bags filled with some soft, fine, and weighty material. . . . They hastened to untie one of the sacks and found its contents to consist of nothing but lice, which had been paid as a tribute by the poor." Bancroft, Native Races, vol. ii. p. 235. Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., tom. i. p. 461.—M.]

payment of the tribute.[28] * Tax-gatherers were also distributed throughout the kingdom, who were recognized by their official badges, and dreaded from the merciless rigor of their exactions. By a stern law, every defaulter was liable to be taken and sold as a slave. In the capital were spacious granaries and warehouses for the reception of the tributes. A receiver-general was quartered in the palace, who rendered in an exact account of the various contributions, and watched over the conduct of the inferior agents, in whom the least malversation was summarily punished. This functionary was furnished with a map of the whole empire, with a minute specification of the imposts assessed on every part of it. These imposts, moderate under the reigns of the early princes, became so burdensome under those at the close of the dynasty, being rendered still more oppressive by the

[28] The caciques who submitted to the allied arms were usually confirmed in their authority, and the conquered places allowed to retain their laws and usages. (Zurita, Rapport, p. 67.) The conquests were not always partitioned, but sometimes, singularly enough, were held in common by the three powers. Ibid., p. 11.

* [Very few garrisons were ever quartered in subject pueblos. The warriors Cortés encountered in his second attack upon Mexico were not the garrisons of the cities, but special bodies sent out to meet the Spaniards. The "calpixqui," or tax-gatherers, were spies as well as officers, and were hated as were the "publicans" in all lands where the taxes were "farmed." The "chief of men" had many subordinates. His couriers were not infrequently outcasts. Bearing in mind the class of persons with whom he had to deal officially, and the fact that it was his function to represent the majesty of the clan on all public occasions, it is not remarkable that he should have conducted himself with such haughtiness as to lead the Spaniards to suppose that he was an absolute king. That he had really no kingly power was manifested when Montezuma was a prisoner in the hands of the Spaniards. His special duty was to execute the commands of the tribal council.—M.]

manner of collection, that they bred disaffection throughout the land, and prepared the way for its conquest by the Spaniards.[29]

Communication was maintained with the remotest parts of the country by means of couriers. Post-houses were established on the great roads, about two leagues distant from each other. The courier, bearing his despatches in the form of a hieroglyphical painting, ran with them to the first station, where they were taken by another messenger and carried forward to the next, and so on till they reached the capital. These couriers, trained from childhood, travelled with incredible swiftness,—not four or five leagues an hour, as an old chronicler would make us believe, but with such speed that despatches were carried from one to two hundred miles a day.[30] Fresh fish was frequently served at Montezuma's table in twenty-four hours from the time it had been taken in the Gulf of Mexico, two hundred miles from the capital. In this way intelligence of the movements of the royal armies was rapidly brought to

[29] Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 17.—Carta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 110.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 6, 8.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 13.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 18, 19.

[30] The Hon. C. A. Murray, whose imperturbable good humor under real troubles forms a contrast, rather striking, to the sensitiveness of some of his predecessors to imaginary ones, tells us, among other marvels, that an Indian of his party travelled a hundred miles in four-and-twenty hours. (Travels in North America (New York, 1839), vol. i. p. 193.) The Greek who, according to Plutarch, brought the news of victory to Platæa, a hundred and twenty-five miles, in a day, was a better traveller still. Some interesting facts on the pedestrian capabilities of man in the savage state are collected by Buffon, who concludes, truly enough, "L'homme civilisé ne connaît pas ses forces." (Histoire naturelle: De la Jeunesse.)

court; and the dress of the courier, denoting by its color the nature of his tidings, spread joy or consternation in the towns through which he passed.[31]

But the great aim of the Aztec institutions, to which private discipline and public honors were alike directed, was the profession of arms. In Mexico, as in Egypt, the soldier shared with the priest the highest consideration. The king, as we have seen, must be an experienced warrior. The tutelary deity of the Aztecs was the god of war. A great object of their military expeditions was to gather hecatombs of captives for his altars. The soldier who fell in battle was transported at once to the region of ineffable bliss in the bright mansions of the Sun.[32] Every war, therefore, became a crusade; and the warrior, animated by a religious enthusiasm like that of the early Saracen or the Christian crusader, was not only raised to a contempt of danger, but courted it, for the imperishable crown of martyrdom. Thus we find the same impulse acting in the most opposite quarters of the

[31] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 1.—The same wants led to the same expedients in ancient Rome, and still more ancient Persia. "Nothing in the world is borne so swiftly," says Herodotus, "as messages by the Persian couriers;" which his commentator Valckenaer prudently qualifies by the exception of the carrier-pigeon. (Herodotus, Hist., Urania, sec. 98, nec non Adnot. ed. Schweighäuser.) Couriers are noticed, in the thirteenth century, in China, by Marco Polo. Their stations were only three miles apart, and they accomplished five days' journey in one. (Viaggi di Marco Polo, lib. 2, cap. 20, ap. Ramusio, tom. ii.) A similar arrangement for posts subsists there at the present day, and excites the admiration of a modern traveller. (Anderson, British Embassy to China (London, 1796), p. 282.) In all these cases, the posts were for the use of government only.

[32] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, Apend., cap. 3.

globe, and the Asiatic, the European, and the American, each earnestly invoking the holy name of religion in the perpetration of human butchery.

The question of war was discussed in a council of the king and his chief nobles.* Ambassadors were sent, previously to its declaration, to require the hostile state to receive the Mexican gods and to pay the customary tribute. The persons of ambassadors were held sacred throughout Anahuac. They were lodged and entertained in the great towns at the public charge, and were everywhere received with courtesy, so long as they did not deviate from the high-roads on their route. When they did, they forfeited their privileges. If the embassy proved unsuccessful, a defiance, or open declaration of war, was sent; quotas were drawn from the conquered provinces, which were always subjected to military service, as well as the payment of taxes; and the royal army, usually with the monarch at its head, began its march.[33]

The Aztec princes made use of the incentives employed by European monarchs to excite the ambition of their followers. They established various military orders, each having its privileges and peculiar insignia. There seems, also, to have existed a sort of knighthood of inferior degree.† It was the cheapest reward of martial prowess, and

[33] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 68, 120.—Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 67; vol. vi. p. 74.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 1.—The reader will find a remarkable resemblance to these military usages in those of the early Romans. Com. Liv., Hist., lib. 1, cap. 32; lib. 4, cap. 30, et alibi.

* [The general council of the tribe.—M.]

† ["Distinguished braves," see note, p. 35.—M.]

whoever had not reached it was excluded from using ornaments on his arms or his person, and obliged to wear a coarse white stuff, made from the threads of the aloe, called *nequen*. Even the members of the royal family were not excepted from this law, which reminds one of the occasional practice of Christian knights, to wear plain armor, or shields without device, till they had achieved some doughty feat of chivalry. Although the military orders were thrown open to all, it is probable that they were chiefly filled with persons of rank, who, by their previous training and connections, were able to come into the field under peculiar advantages.[34]

The dress of the higher warriors was picturesque and often magnificent. Their bodies were covered with a close vest of quilted cotton, so thick as to be impenetrable to the light missiles of Indian warfare. This garment was so light and serviceable that it was adopted by the Spaniards. The wealthier chiefs sometimes wore, instead of this cotton mail, a cuirass made of thin plates of gold or silver. Over it was thrown a surcoat of the gorgeous feather-work in which they excelled.[35]

[34] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 4, 5.—Acosta, lib. 6, ch. 26.—Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 65; vol. vi. p. 72.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.

[35] "Their mail, if mail it may be called, was woven
Of vegetable down, like finest flax,
Bleached to the whiteness of new-fallen snow.
* * * * * *
Others, of higher office, were arrayed
In feathery breastplates, of more gorgeous hue
Than the gay plumage of the mountain-cock,
Than the pheasant's glittering pride. But what were these,
Or what the thin gold hauberk, when opposed
To arms like ours in battle?"

Madoc, Part 1, canto 7.

Beautiful painting! One may doubt, however, the propriety of the Welshman's vaunt, before the use of fire-arms.

Their helmets were sometimes of wood, fashioned like the heads of wild animals, and sometimes of silver, on the top of which waved a *panache* of variegated plumes, sprinkled with precious stones and ornaments of gold. They wore also collars, bracelets, and ear-rings of the same rich materials.[36]

Their armies were divided into bodies of eight thousand men; and these, again, into companies of three or four hundred, each with its own commander. The national standard, which has been compared to the ancient Roman, displayed, in its embroidery of gold and feather-work, the armorial ensigns of the state. These were significant of its name, which, as the names of both persons and places were borrowed from some material object, was easily expressed by hieroglyphical symbols. The companies and the great chiefs had also their appropriate banners and devices, and the gaudy hues of their many-colored plumes gave a dazzling splendor to the spectacle.

Their tactics were such as belong to a nation with whom war, though a trade, is not elevated to the rank of a science. They advanced singing, and shouting their war-cries, briskly charging the enemy, as rapidly retreating, and making use of ambuscades, sudden surprises, and the light skirmish of guerilla warfare. Yet their discipline was such as to draw forth the encomiums of the Spanish conquerors. "A beautiful sight it was," says one of them, "to see them set out on their march, all

[36] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 27; lib. 8, cap. 12. —Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 305.— Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.

moving forward so gayly, and in so admirable order!" [37] In battle they did not seek to kill their enemies, so much as to take them prisoners; * and they never scalped, like other North American tribes. The valor of a warrior was estimated by the number of his prisoners; and no ransom was large enough to save the devoted captive.[38]

Their military code bore the same stern features as their other laws. Disobedience of orders was punished with death. It was death, also, for a soldier to leave his colors, to attack the enemy before the signal was given, or to plunder another's booty or prisoners. One of the last Tezcucan princes, in the spirit of an ancient Roman, put two sons to death—after having cured their wounds—for violating the last-mentioned law.[39]

I must not omit to notice here an institution the introduction of which in the Old World is ranked among the beneficent fruits of Christianity. Hospitals were established in the principal cities, for the cure of the sick and the permanent refuge of

[37] Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ubi supra.

[38] Col. of Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 65, 66; vol. vi. p. 73.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 12.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte I. cap. 7.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 3.—Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, loc. cit.—Scalping may claim high authority, or, at least, antiquity. The Father of History gives an account of it among the Scythians, showing that they performed the operation, and wore the hideous trophy, in the same manner as our North American Indians. (Herodot., Hist., Melpomene, sec. 64.) Traces of the same savage custom are also found in the laws of the Visigoths, among the Franks, and even the Anglo-Saxons. (See Guizot, Cours d'Histoire moderne (Paris, 1829), tom. i. p. 283.)

[39] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 67.

* [That they might offer them as living sacrifices to their gods.—M.]

the disabled soldier; * and surgeons were placed over them, "who were so far better than those in Europe," says an old chronicler, "that they did not protract the cure in order to increase the pay." [40]

Such is the brief outline of the civil and military polity of the ancient Mexicans; less perfect than could be desired in regard to the former, from the imperfection of the sources whence it is drawn. Whoever has had occasion to explore the early history of modern Europe has found how vague and unsatisfactory is the political information which can be gleaned from the gossip of monkish annalists. How much is the difficulty increased in the present instance, where this information, first recorded in the dubious language of hieroglyphics, was interpreted in another language, with which the Spanish chroniclers were imperfectly acquainted, while it related to institutions of which their past experience enabled them to form no adequate conception! Amidst such uncertain lights, it is in vain to expect nice accuracy of detail. All that can be done is to attempt an outline of the more prominent features, that a correct impression, so far as it goes, may be produced on the mind of the reader.

Enough has been said, however, to show that the Aztec and Tezcucan races were advanced in civilization very far beyond the wandering tribes of

[40] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 12, cap. 6; lib. 14, cap. 3.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.

* [The sick and the disabled were quartered and cared for in some of the great communal houses.—M.]

North America.[41] The degree of civilization which they had reached, as inferred by their political institutions, may be considered, perhaps, not much short of that enjoyed by our Saxon ancestors under Alfred. In respect to the nature of it, they may be better compared with the Egyptians; and the examination of their social relations and culture may suggest still stronger points of resemblance to that ancient people.

Those familiar with the modern Mexicans will find it difficult to conceive that the nation should ever have been capable of devising the enlightened polity which we have been considering. But they should remember that in the Mexicans of our day

[41] Zurita is indignant at the epithet of *barbarians* bestowed on the Aztecs; an epithet, he says, "which could come from no one who had personal knowledge of the capacity of the people, or their institutions, and which in some respects is quite as well merited by the European nations." (Rapport, p. 200, et seq.) This is strong language. Yet no one had better means of knowing than this eminent jurist, who for nineteen years held a post in the royal *audiences* of New Spain. During his long residence in the country he had ample opportunity of acquainting himself with its usages, both through his own personal observation and intercourse with the natives, and through the first missionaries who came over after the Conquest. On his return to Spain, probably about 1560, he occupied himself with an answer to queries which had been propounded by the government, on the character of the Aztec laws and institutions, and on that of the modifications introduced by the Spaniards. Much of his treatise is taken up with the latter subject. In what relates to the former he is more brief than could be wished, from the difficulty, perhaps, of obtaining full and satisfactory information as to the details. As far as he goes, however, he manifests a sound and discriminating judgment. He is very rarely betrayed into the extravagance of expression so visible in the writers of the time; and this temperance, combined with his uncommon sources of information, makes his work one of highest authority on the limited topics within its range. The original manuscript was consulted by Clavigero, and, indeed, has been used by other writers. The work is now accessible to all, as one of the series of translations from the pen of the indefatigable Ternaux.

they see only a conquered race; as different from their ancestors as are the modern Egyptians from those who built,—I will not say, the tasteless pyramids,—but the temples and palaces whose magnificent wrecks strew the borders of the Nile, at Luxor and Karnac. The difference is not so great as between the ancient Greek, and his degenerate descendant, lounging among the masterpieces of art which he has scarcely taste enough to admire,—speaking the language of those still more imperishable monuments of literature which he has hardly capacity to comprehend. Yet he breathes the same atmosphere, is warmed by the same sun, nourished by the same scenes, as those who fell at Marathon and won the trophies of Olympic Pisa. The same blood flows in his veins that flowed in theirs. But ages of tyranny have passed over him; he belongs to a conquered race.

The American Indian has something peculiarly sensitive in his nature. He shrinks instinctively from the rude touch of a foreign hand. Even when this foreign influence comes in the form of civilization, he seems to sink and pine away beneath it. It has been so with the Mexicans. Under the Spanish domination, their numbers have silently melted away. Their energies are broken. They no longer tread their mountain plains with the conscious independence of their ancestors. In their faltering step and meek and melancholy aspect we read the sad characters of the conquered race. The cause of humanity, indeed, has gained. They live under a better system of laws, a more assured tranquillity, a purer faith.

But all does not avail. Their civilization was of the hardy character which belongs to the wilderness. The fierce virtues of the Aztec were all his own. They refused to submit to European culture,—to be engrafted on a foreign stock. His outward form, his complexion, his lineaments, are substantially the same; but the moral characteristics of the nation, all that constituted its individuality as a race, are effaced forever.

Two of the principal authorities for this chapter are Torquemada and Clavigero. The former, a Provincial of the Franciscan order, came to the New World about the middle of the sixteenth century. As the generation of the Conquerors had not then passed away, he had ample opportunities of gathering the particulars of their enterprise from their own lips. Fifty years, during which he continued in the country, put him in possession of the traditions and usages of the natives, and enabled him to collect their history from the earliest missionaries, as well as from such monuments as the fanaticism of his own countrymen had not then destroyed. From these ample sources he compiled his bulky tomes, beginning, after the approved fashion of the ancient Castilian chroniclers, with the creation of the world, and embracing the whole circle of the Mexican institutions, political, religious, and social, from the earliest period to his own time. In handling these fruitful themes, the worthy father has shown a full measure of the bigotry which belonged to his order at that period. Every page, too, is loaded with illustrations from Scripture or profane history, which form a whimsical contrast to the barbaric staple of his story; and he has sometimes fallen into serious errors, from his misconception of the chronological system of the Aztecs. But, notwithstanding these glaring defects in the composition of the work, the student, aware of his author's infirmities, will find few better guides than Torquemada in tracing the stream of historic truth up to the fountain-head; such is his manifest integrity, and so great were his facilities for information on the most curious points of Mexican antiquity. No work, accordingly, has been more largely consulted and copied, even by some who, like Herrera, have affected to set little value on the sources whence its information was drawn. (Hist. general, dec. 6, lib. 6, cap. 19.) The *Monarchia Indiana* was first published at Seville, 1615 (Nic. Antonio, Bibliotheca Nova (Matriti, 1783), tom. ii. p. 787), and since, in a better style, in three volumes folio, at Madrid, in 1723.

The other authority, frequently cited in the preceding pages, is the Abbé Clavigero's *Storia antica del Messico.* It was originally printed

towards the close of the last century, in the Italian language, and in Italy, whither the author, a native of Vera Cruz, and a member of the order of the Jesuits, had retired, on the expulsion of that body from Spanish America, in 1767. During a residence of thirty-five years in his own country, Clavigero had made himself intimately acquainted with its antiquities, by the careful examination of paintings, manuscripts, and such other remains as were to be found in his day. The plan of his work is nearly as comprehensive as that of his predecessor, Torquemada; but the later and more cultivated period in which he wrote is visible in the superior address with which he has managed his complicated subject. In the elaborate disquisitions in his concluding volume, he has done much to rectify the chronology and the various inaccuracies of preceding writers. Indeed, an avowed object of his work was to vindicate his countrymen from what he conceived to be the misrepresentations of Robertson, Raynal, and De Pau. In regard to the last two he was perfectly successful. Such an ostensible design might naturally suggest unfavorable ideas of his impartiality. But, on the whole, he seems to have conducted the discussion with good faith; and, if he has been led by national zeal to overcharge the picture with brilliant colors, he will be found much more temperate, in this respect, than those who preceded him, while he has applied sound principles of criticism, of which they were incapable. In a word, the diligence of his researches has gathered into one focus the scattered lights of tradition and antiquarian lore, purified in a great measure from the mists of superstition which obscure the best productions of an earlier period. From these causes, the work, notwithstanding its occasional prolixity, and the disagreeable aspect given to it by the profusion of uncouth names in the Mexican orthography, which bristle over every page, has found merited favor with the public, and created something like a popular interest in the subject. Soon after its publication at Cesena, in 1780, it was translated into English, and more lately into Spanish and German.

CHAPTER III

MEXICAN MYTHOLOGY—THE SACERDOTAL ORDER —THE TEMPLES—HUMAN SACRIFICES

THE civil polity of the Aztecs is so closely blended with their religion that without understanding the latter it is impossible to form correct ideas of their government or their social institutions. I shall pass over, for the present, some remarkable traditions, bearing a singular resemblance to those found in the Scriptures, and endeavor to give a brief sketch of their mythology and their careful provisions for maintaining a national worship.

Mythology may be regarded as the poetry of religion, or rather as the poetic development of the religious principle in a primitive age. It is the effort of untutored man to explain the mysteries of existence, and the secret agencies by which the operations of nature are conducted. Although the growth of similar conditions of society, its character must vary with that of the rude tribes in which it originates; and the ferocious Goth, quaffing mead from the skulls of his slaughtered enemies, must have a very different mythology from that of the effeminate native of Hispaniola, loiter-

ing away his hours in idle pastimes, under the shadow of his bananas.

At a later and more refined period, we sometimes find these primitive legends combined into a regular system under the hands of the poet, and the rude outline moulded into forms of ideal beauty, which are the objects of adoration in a credulous age, and the delight of all succeeding ones. Such were the beautiful inventions of Hesiod and Homer, "who," says the Father of History, "created the theogony of the Greeks;" an assertion not to be taken too literally, since it is hardly possible that any man should create a religious system for his nation.[1] They only filled up the shadowy outlines of tradition with the bright touches of their own imaginations, until they had clothed them in beauty which kindled the imaginations of others. The power of the poet, indeed, may be felt in a similar way in a much riper period of society. To say nothing of the "Divina Commedia," who is there that rises from the perusal of "Paradise Lost" without feeling his own conceptions of the angelic hierarchy quickened by those of the inspired artist, and a new and sensible form, as it were, given to images which had before floated dim and undefined before him?

The last-mentioned period is succeeded by that of philosophy; which, disclaiming alike the legends of the primitive age and the poetical embel-

[1] *ποιήσαντες θεογονίην Ἕλλησι.* Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 53.—Heeren hazards a remark equally strong, respecting the epic poets of India, "who," says he, "have supplied the numerous gods that fill her Pantheon." Historical Researches, Eng. trans. (Oxford, 1833), vol. iii. p. 139.

lishments of the succeeding one, seeks to shelter itself from the charge of impiety by giving an allegorical interpretation to the popular mythology, and thus to reconcile the latter with the genuine deductions of science.

The Mexican religion had emerged from the first of the schools we have been considering, and, although little affected by poetical influences, had received a peculiar complexion from the priests, who had digested as thorough and burdensome a ceremonial as ever existed in any nation. They had, moreover, thrown the veil of allegory over early tradition, and invested their deities with attributes savoring much more of the grotesque conceptions of the Eastern nations in the Old World, than of the lighter fictions of Greek mythology, in which the features of humanity, however exaggerated, were never wholly abandoned.[2]

In contemplating the religious system of the Aztecs, one is struck with its apparent incongruity, as if some portion of it had emanated from a comparatively refined people, open to gentle influences, while the rest breathes a spirit of unmitigated ferocity. It naturally suggests the idea of two distinct sources, and authorizes the belief that the Aztecs had inherited from their predecessors a milder faith, on which was afterwards engrafted

[2] The Hon. Mountstuart Elphinstone has fallen into a similar train of thought, in a comparison of the Hindoo and Greek mythology, in his History of India, published since the remarks in the text were written. (See Book I. ch. 4.) The same chapter of this truly philosophic work suggests some curious points of resemblance to the Aztec religious institutions, that may furnish pertinent illustrations to the mind bent on tracing the affinities of the Asiatic and American races.

their own mythology. The latter soon became dominant, and gave its dark coloring to the creeds of the conquered nations,—which the Mexicans, like the ancient Romans, seem willingly to have incorporated into their own,—until the same funereal superstition settled over the farthest borders of Anahuac.

The Aztecs recognized the existence of a supreme Creator and Lord of the universe. They addressed him, in their prayers, as "the God by whom we live," "omnipresent, that knoweth all thoughts, and giveth all gifts," "without whom man is as nothing," "invisible, incorporeal, one God, of *perfect perfection* and purity," "under whose wings we find repose and a sure defence." These sublime attributes infer no inadequate conception of the true God. But the idea of unity—of a being with whom volition is action, who has no need of inferior ministers to execute his purposes—was too simple, or too vast, for their understandings; and they sought relief, as usual, in a plurality of deities, who presided over the elements, the changes of the seasons, and the various occupations of man.[3] Of these, there were thirteen principal deities, and more than two hundred inferior; to each of whom some special day or appropriate festival was consecrated.[4]

[3] Ritter has well shown, by the example of the Hindoo system, how the idea of unity suggests, of itself, that of plurality. History of Ancient Philosophy, Eng. trans. (Oxford, 1838), Book II. ch. 1.

[4] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, passim.—Acosta, lib. 5, ch. 9.—Boturini, Idea, p. 8, et seq.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—The Mexicans, according to Clavigero, believed in an evil Spirit, the enemy of the human race,

At the head of all stood the terrible Huitzilopochtli, the Mexican Mars; although it is doing injustice to the heroic war-god of antiquity to identify him with this sanguinary monster. This was the patron deity of the nation. His fantastic image was loaded with costly ornaments. His temples were the most stately and august of the public edifices; and his altars reeked with the blood of human hecatombs in every city of the empire. Disastrous indeed must have been the influence of such a superstition on the character of the people.[5]

whose barbarous name signified "Rational Owl." (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 2.) The curate Bernaldez speaks of the Devil being embroidered on the dresses of Columbus's Indians, in the likeness of an owl. (Historia de los Reyes Católicos, MS., cap. 131.) This must not be confounded, however, with the evil Spirit in the mythology of the North American Indians (see Heckewelder's Account, ap. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, vol. i. p. 205), still less with the evil Principle of the Oriental nations of the Old World. It was only one among many deities, for evil was found too liberally mingled in the natures of most of the Aztec gods—in the same manner as with the Greeks—to admit of its personification by any one.

[5] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, cap. 1, et seq.—Acosta, lib. 5. ch. 9.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 6, cap. 21.—Boturini, Idea, pp. 27, 28.—Huitzilopochtli is compounded of two words, signifying "humming-bird," and "left," from his image having the feathers of this bird on its left foot (Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 17); an amiable etymology for so ruffian a deity.*—The

* [The name may possibly have referred to the whispered oracles and intimations in dreams—such as "a little bird of the air" is still fabled to convey—by which, according to the legend, the deity had guided his people in their migrations and conquests. That it had a symbolical meaning will hardly be doubted, and M. Brasseur de Bourbourg, who had originally explained it as "Huitzil the Left-handed,"—the proper name of a deified hero with the addition of a descriptive epithet,—has since found one of too deep an import to be briefly expounded or easily understood. (Quatre Lettres sur le Mexique (Paris, 1868), p. 201, et al.) *Mexitl,* another name of the

A far more interesting personage in their mythology was Quetzalcoatl, god of the air, a divinity who, during his residence on earth, instructed the

fantastic forms of the Mexican idols were in the highest degree symbolical. See Gama's learned exposition of the devices on the statue of the goddess found in the great square of Mexico. (Descripcion de las Dos Piedras (México, 1832), Parte 1, pp. 34–44.) The tradition respecting the origin of this god, or, at least, his appearance on earth, is curious. He was born of a woman. His mother, a devout person, one day, in her attendance on the temple, saw a ball of bright-colored feathers floating in the air. She took it, and deposited it in her bosom. She soon after found herself pregnant, and the dread deity was born, coming into the world, like Minerva, all armed,—with a spear in the right hand, a shield in the left, and his head surmounted by a crest of green plumes. (See Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 19, et seq.) A similar notion in respect to the incarnation of their principal deity existed among the people of India beyond the Ganges, of China, and of Thibet. "Budh," says Milman, in his learned and luminous work on the history of Christianity, "according to a tradition known in the West, was born of a virgin. So were the Fohi of China, and the Schakaof of Thibet, no doubt the same, whether a mythic or a real personage. The Jesuits in China, says Barrow, were appalled at finding in the mythology of that country the counterpart of the Virgo Deipara." (Vol. i. p. 99, note.) The existence of similar religious ideas in remote regions, inhabited by different races, is an interesting subject of study, furnishing, as it does, one of the most important links in the great chain of communication which binds together the distant families of nations.

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same deity, is translated "the hare of the aloes." In some accounts the two are distinct personages. Mythological science rejects the legend, and regards the Aztec war-god as a "nature-deity," a personification of the lightning, this being a natural type of warlike might, of which the common symbol, the serpent, was represented among the decorations of the idol. (Myths of the New World, p. 118.) More commonly he has been identified with the sun, and Mr. Tylor, while declining "to attempt a general solution of this inextricable compound parthenogenetic deity," notices the association of his principal festival with the winter's solstice, and the fact that his paste idol was then shot through with an arrow, as tending to show that the life and death of the deity were emblematic of the year's, "while his functions of war-god may have been of later addition." Primitive Culture, tom. ii. p. 279.—K.]

natives in the use of metals, in agriculture, and in the arts of government. He was one of those benefactors of their species, doubtless, who have been deified by the gratitude of posterity. Under him, the earth teemed with fruits and flowers, without the pains of culture. An ear of Indian corn was as much as a single man could carry. The cotton, as it grew, took, of its own accord, the rich dyes of human art. The air was filled with intoxicating perfumes and the sweet melody of birds. In short, these were the halcyon days, which find a place in the mythic systems of so many nations in the Old World. It was the *golden age* of Anahuac.*

From some cause, not explained, Quetzalcoatl incurred the wrath of one of the principal gods, and was compelled to abandon the country. On his way he stopped at the city of Cholula, where a

* [For the Aztec myths our most valuable authority is the Historia de los Méxicanos por sus Pinturas, by Ramirez de Fuen-leal. This is taken directly from the sacred books of the Aztecs as explained by survivors of the Conquest. Bandelier, Archæological Tour, calls it the earliest statement of the Nahua myths. The other "sources" are Motolinía, Mendieta, Sahagun, Ixtlilxochitl, and Torquemada. Bancroft, Native Races, vol. iii. ch. 7, sums them up admirably.

Brinton, Myths of the New World, thinks Quetzalcoatl "a pure creature of the fancy." Bandelier, whose presentation of the subject is most full and complete (Archæological Tour), agrees with Prescott that Quetzalcoatl began his career as leader of a migration southward. His principal sojourn was at Cholula. See also Payne, New World Called America, vol. i. pp. 588–596. P. de Roo, History of America before Columbus, vol. i. ch. xxii and xxiii, gives a very full presentation of the legend. He writes from the point of view of a priest of the Roman Catholic Church. His conclusion is that Quetzalcoatl was a Christian prelate, and that Christian doctrines were introduced into aboriginal America by European immigrants.—M.]

temple was dedicated to his worship, the massy ruins of which still form one of the interesting relics of antiquity in Mexico. When he reached the shores of the Mexican Gulf, he took leave of his followers, promising that he and his descendants would revisit them hereafter, and then, entering his wizard skiff, made of serpents' skins, embarked on the great ocean for the fabled land of Tlapallan. He was said to have been tall in stature, with a white skin, long, dark hair, and a flowing beard. The Mexicans looked confidently to the return of the benevolent deity; and this remarkable tradition, deeply cherished in their hearts, prepared the way, as we shall see hereafter, for the future success of the Spaniards.[6]

[6] Codex Vaticanus, Pl. 15, and Codex Telleriano-Remensis, Part 2, Pl. 2, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, cap. 3, 4, 13, 14.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 6, cap. 24.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—Gomara, Crónica de la Nueva-España, cap. 222, ap. Barcia, Historiadores primitivos de las Indias Occidentales (Madrid, 1749), tom. ii.—Quetzalcoatl signifies "feathered serpent." The last syllable means, likewise, a "twin;" which furnished an argument for Dr. Siguenza to identify this god with the apostle Thomas (Didymus signifying also a twin), who, he supposes, came over to America to preach the gospel. In this rather startling conjecture he is supported by several of his devout countrymen, who appear to have as little doubt of the fact as of the advent of St. James, for a similar purpose, in the mother-country. See the various authorities and arguments set forth with becoming gravity in Dr. Mier's dissertation in Bustamante's edition of Sahagun (lib. 3, Suplem.), and Veytia (tom. i. pp. 160–200). Our ingenious countryman McCulloh carries the Aztec god up to a still more respectable antiquity, by identifying him with the patriarch Noah. Researches, Philosophical and Antiquarian, concerning the Aboriginal History of America (Baltimore, 1829), p. 233.*

* [Under the modern system of mythical interpretation, which has been applied by Dr. Brinton with singular force and ingenuity to the traditions of the New World, Quetzalcoatl, "the central figure of Toltec mythology," with the corresponding figures found in the

We have not space for further details respecting the Mexican divinities, the attributes of many of whom were carefully defined, as they descended,

legends of the Mayas, Quichés, Peruvians, and other races, loses all personal existence, and becomes a creation of that primitive religious sentiment which clothed the uncomprehending powers of nature with the attributes of divinity. His name, "Bird-Serpent," unites the emblems of the wind and the lightning. "He is both lord of the eastern light and the winds. As the former, he was born of a virgin in the land of Tula or Tlapallan, in the distant Orient, and was high-priest of that happy realm. The morning star was his symbol. . . . Like all the dawn heroes, he too was represented as of white complexion, clothed in long white robes, and, as most of the Aztec gods, with a full and flowing beard. When his earthly work was done, he too returned to the east, assigning as a reason that the sun, the ruler of Tlapallan, demanded his presence. But the real motive was that he had been overcome by Tezcatlipoca, otherwise called Yoalliehecatl, the wind or spirit of the night, who had descended from heaven by a spider's web and presented his rival with a draught pretended to confer immortality, but, in fact, producing uncontrollable longing for home. For the wind and the light both depart when the gloaming draws near, or when the clouds spread their dark and shadowy webs along the mountains and pour the vivifying rain upon the fields. . . . Wherever he went, all manner of singing birds bore him company, emblems of the whistling breezes. When he finally disappeared in the far east, he sent back four trusty youths, who had ever shared his fortunes, incomparably swift and light of foot, with directions to divide the earth between them and rule it till he should return and resume his power." (The Myths of the New World, p. 180, et seq.) So far as mere physical attributes are concerned, this analysis may be accepted as a satisfactory elucidation of the class of figures to which it relates. But the grand and distinguishing characteristic of these figures is the moral and intellectual eminence ascribed to them. They are invested with the highest qualities of humanity,—attributes neither drawn from the external phenomena of nature nor born of any rude sentiment of wonder and fear. Their lives and doctrines are in strong contrast with those of the ordinary divinities of the same or other lands, and they are objects not of a propitiatory worship, but of a pious veneration. Can we, then, assent to the conclusion that under this aspect also they were "wholly mythical," "creations of the religious fancy," "ideals summing up in themselves the best traits, the most approved virtues, of whole nations"? (Ibid., pp. 293, 294.) This would seem to imply that nations may attain to lofty conceptions of moral truth and excellence by a process of selection, without any standard or point of view furnished

in regular gradation, to the *penates* or household gods, whose little images were to be found in the humblest dwelling.

The Aztecs felt the curiosity, common to man in almost every stage of civilization, to lift the veil which covers the mysterious past and the more awful future. They sought relief, like the nations of the Old Continent, from the oppressive idea of eternity, by breaking it up into distinct cycles, or periods of time, each of several thousand years' duration. There were four of these cycles, and at the end of each, by the agency of one of the elements, the human family was swept from the earth, and the sun blotted out from the heavens, to be again rekindled.[7]

[7] Cod. Vat., Pl. 7–10, Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 1.—M. de Humboldt has been at some pains to trace the analogy between the Aztec cosmogony and that of Eastern Asia. He has tried, though in vain, to find a multiple which might serve as the key to the calculations of the former. (Vues des Cordillères, pp. 202–212.) In truth, there seems to be a material discordance in the Mexican statements, both in regard to the number of revolutions and their duration. A manuscript before me, of

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by living embodiments of the ideal. But this would be as impossible as to arrive at conceptions of the highest forms and ideas of art independently of the special genius and actual productions of the artist. In the one case, as in the other, the ideal is derived originally from examples shaped by finer and deeper intuitions than those of the masses. "Im Anfang war die That." The mere fact, therefore, that the Mexican people recognized an exalted ideal of purity and wisdom is a sufficient proof that men had existed among them who displayed these qualities in an eminent degree. The status of their civilization, imperfect as it was, can be accounted for only in the same way. Comparative mythology may resolve into its original elements a personification of the forces of nature woven by the religious fancy of primitive races, but it cannot sever that chain of discoverers and civilizers by which mankind has been drawn from the abysses of savage ignorance, and by which its progress, when uninterrupted, has been always maintained.—K.]

They imagined three separate states of existence in the future life. The wicked, comprehending the greater part of mankind, were to expiate their sins in a place of everlasting darkness. Another class, with no other merit than that of having died of certain diseases, capriciously selected, were to enjoy a negative existence of indolent contentment. The highest place was reserved, as in most warlike nations, for the heroes who fell in battle, or in sacrifice. They passed at once into the presence of the Sun, whom they accompanied with songs and choral dances in his bright progress through the heavens; and, after some years, their spirits went to animate the clouds and singing-birds of beautiful plumage, and to revel amidst the rich blossoms and odors of the gardens of paradise.[8] Such was the heaven of the Aztecs; more refined in its character than that of the more polished pagan, whose elysium reflected only the martial sports or sensual gratifications of this

Ixtlilxochitl, reduces them to three, before the present state of the world, and allows only 4394 years for them (Sumaria Relacion, MS., No. 1); Gama, on the faith of an ancient Indian MS. in Boturini's Catalogue (viii. 13), reduces the duration still lower (Descripcion de las Dos Piedras, Parte 1, p. 49, et seq.); while the cycles of the Vatican paintings take up near 18,000 years.—It is interesting to observe how the wild *conjectures* of an ignorant age have been confirmed by the more recent *discoveries* in geology, making it probable that the earth has experienced a number of convulsions, possibly thousands of years distant from each other, which have swept away the races then existing, and given a new aspect to the globe.

[8] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, Apend.—Cod. Vat., ap. Antiq. of Mexico, Pl. 1–5.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 48.—The last writer assures us "that, as to what the Aztecs said of their going to hell, they were right; for, as they died in ignorance of the true faith, they have, without question, all gone there to suffer everlasting punishment"! Ubi supra.

life.[9] In the destiny they assigned to the wicked, we discern similar traces of refinement; since the absence of all physical torture forms a striking contrast to the schemes of suffering so ingeniously devised by the fancies of the most enlightened nations.[10] In all this, so contrary to the natural suggestions of the ferocious Aztec, we see the evidences of a higher civilization,* inherited from their predecessors in the land.

Our limits will allow only a brief allusion to one or two of their most interesting ceremonies. On the death of a person, his corpse was dressed in the peculiar habiliments of his tutelar deity. It was strewed with pieces of paper, which operated as

[9] It conveys but a poor idea of these pleasures, that the shade of Achilles can say "he had rather be the slave of the meanest man on earth, than sovereign among the dead." (Odyss., A. 488–490.) The Mahometans believe that the souls of martyrs pass, after death, into the bodies of birds, that haunt the sweet waters and bowers of Paradise. (Sale's Koran (London, 1825), vol. i. p. 106.)—The Mexican heaven may remind one of Dante's, in its *material* enjoyments; which, in both, are made up of light, music, and motion. The sun, it must also be remembered, was a spiritual conception with the Aztec:

> "He sees with other eyes than theirs; where they
> Behold a sun, he spies a deity."

[10] It is singular that the Tuscan bard, while exhausting his invention in devising modes of bodily torture, in his "Inferno," should have made so little use of the *moral* sources of misery. That he has not done so might be reckoned a strong proof of the rudeness of time, did we not meet with examples of it in a later day; in which a serious and sublime writer, like Dr. Watts, does not disdain to employ the same coarse machinery for moving the conscience of the reader.

* [It should perhaps be regarded rather as evidence of a low civilization, since the absence of any strict ideas of retribution is a characteristic of the notions in regard to a future life entertained by savage races. See Tylor, Primitive Culture, vol. ii. p. 76, et seq.—K.]

charms against the dangers of the dark road he was to travel. A throng of slaves, if he were rich, was sacrificed at his obsequies. His body was burned, and the ashes, collected in a vase, were preserved in one of the apartments of his house. Here we have successively the usages of the Roman Catholic, the Mussulman, the Tartar, and the ancient Greek and Roman; curious coincidences, which may show how cautious we should be in adopting conclusions founded on analogy.[11]

A more extraordinary coincidence may be traced with Christian rites, in the ceremony of naming their children. The lips and bosom of the infant were sprinkled with water, and "the Lord was implored to permit the holy drops to wash away the sin that was given to it before the foundation of the world; so that the child might be born anew."[12] We are reminded of Christian morals, in more than one of their prayers, in which they used regular forms. "Wilt thou blot us out, O Lord, forever? Is this punishment intended, not

[11] Carta del Lic. Zuazo (Nov. 1521), MS.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 8.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 45.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, Apend.—Sometimes the body was buried entire, with valuable treasures, if the deceased was rich. The "Anonymous Conqueror," as he is called, saw gold to the value of 3000 castellanos drawn from one of these tombs. Relatione d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. p. 310.

[12] This interesting rite, usually solemnized with great formality, in the presence of the assembled friends and relatives, is detailed with minuteness by Sahagun (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 37), and by Zuazo (Carta, MS.), both of them eye-witnesses. For a version of part of Sahagun's account, see Appendix, Part 1, note 26.*

* [A similar rite of baptism, founded on the natural symbolism of the purifying power of water, was practised by other races in America, and had existed in the East, as the reader need hardly be told, long anterior to Christianity.—K.]

for our reformation, but for our destruction?" Again, "Impart to us, out of thy great mercy, thy gifts, which we are not worthy to receive through our own merits." "Keep peace with all," says another petition; "bear injuries with humility; God, who sees, will avenge you." But the most striking parallel with Scripture is in the remarkable declaration that "he who looks too curiously on a woman commits adultery with his eyes."[13] These pure and elevated maxims, it is true, are mixed up with others of a puerile, and even brutal, character, arguing that confusion of the moral perceptions which is natural in the twilight of civilization. One would not expect, however, to meet, in such a state of society, with doctrines as sublime as any inculcated by the enlightened codes of ancient philosophy.[14]

[13] "¿Es posible que este azote y este castigo no se nos dá para nuestra correccion y enmienda, sino para total destruccion y asolamiento?" (Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 1.) "Y esto por sola vuestra liberalidad y magnificencia lo habeis de hacer, que ninguno es digno ni merecedor de recibir vuestra larguezas por su dignidad y merecimiento, sino que por vuestra benignidad." (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 2.) "Sed sufridos y reportados, que Dios bien os vé y responderá por vosotros, y él os vengará (á) sed humildes con todos, y con esto os hará Dios merced y tambien honra." (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 17.) "Tampoco mires con curiosidad el gesto y disposicion de la gente principal, mayormente de las mugeres, y sobre todo de las casadas, porque dice el refran que él que curiosamente mira á la muger adultera con la vista." (Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 22.)

[14] [On reviewing the remarkable coincidences shown in the above pages with the sentiments and even the phraseology of Scripture, we cannot but admit there is plausible ground for Mr. Gallatin's conjecture that the Mexicans, after the Conquest, attributed to their remote ancestors ideas which more properly belonged to a generation coeval with the Conquest, and brought into contact with the Europeans. "The substance," he remarks, "may be true; but several of the prayers convey elevated and correct notions of a Supreme Being, which appear to me altogether inconsistent with that which we

But although the Aztec mythology gathered nothing from the beautiful inventions of the poet or from the refinements of philosophy, it was much indebted, as I have noticed, to the priests, who endeavored to dazzle the imagination of the people by the most formal and pompous ceremonial. The influence of the priesthood must be greatest in an imperfect state of civilization, where it engrosses all the scanty science of the time in its own body. This is particularly the case when the science is of that spurious kind which is less occupied with the real phenomena of nature than with the fanciful chimeras of human superstition. Such are the sciences of astrology and divination, in which the Aztec priests were well initiated; and, while they seemed to hold the keys of the future in their own hands, they impressed the ignorant people with sentiments of superstitious awe, beyond that which has probably existed in any other country,—even in ancient Egypt.

The sacerdotal order was very numerous; as may be inferred from the statement that five thousand priests were, in some way or other, attached to the

know to have been their practical religion and worship." * Transactions of the American Ethnological Society, i. 210.]

* [It is evident that an inconsistency such as belongs to all religions, and to human nature in general, affords no sufficient ground for doubting the authenticity of the prayers reported by Sahagun. Similar specimens of prayers used by the Peruvians have been preserved, and, like those of the Aztecs, exhibit, in their recognition of spiritual as distinct from material blessings, a contrast to the forms of petition employed by the wholly uncivilized races of the north. They are in harmony with the purer conceptions of morality which those nations are admitted to have possessed, and which formed the real basis of their civilization.—K.]

principal temple in the capital. The various ranks and functions of this multitudinous body were discriminated with great exactness. Those best instructed in music took the management of the choirs. Others arranged the festivals conformably to the calendar. Some superintended the education of youth, and others had charge of the hieroglyphical paintings and oral traditions; while the dismal rites of sacrifice were reserved for the chief dignitaries of the order. At the head of the whole establishment were two high-priests, elected from the order, as it would seem, by the king and principal nobles, without reference to birth, but solely for their qualifications, as shown by their previous conduct in a subordinate station. They were equal in dignity, and inferior only to the sovereign, who rarely acted without their advice in weighty matters of public concern.[15]

The priests were each devoted to the service of some particular deity, and had quarters provided within the spacious precincts of their temple; at least, while engaged in immediate attendance there,—for they were allowed to marry, and have families of their own. In this monastic residence

[15] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, Apend.; lib. 3, cap. 9.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 8, cap. 20; lib. 9, cap. 3, 56.—Gomara, Crón., cap. 215, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.—Clavigero says that the high-priest was necessarily a person of rank. (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 37.) I find no authority for this, not even in his oracle, Torquemada, who expressly says, "There is no warrant for the assertion, however probable the fact may be." (Monarch. Ind., lib. 9, cap. 5.) It is contradicted by Sahagun, whom I have followed as the highest authority in these matters. Clavigero had no other knowledge of Sahagun's work than what was filtered through the writings of Torquemada and later authors.

they lived in all the stern severity of conventual discipline. Thrice during the day, and once at night, they were called to prayers. They were frequent in their ablutions and vigils, and mortified the flesh by fasting and cruel penance,—drawing blood from their bodies by flagellation, or by piercing them with the thorns of the aloe; in short, by practising all those austerities to which fanaticism (to borrow the strong language of the poet) has resorted, in every age of the world,

"In hopes to merit heaven by making earth a hell."[16]

The great cities were divided into districts, placed under the charge of a sort of parochial clergy, who regulated every act of religion within their precincts. It is remarkable that they administered the rites of confession and absolution. The secrets of the confessional were held inviolable, and penances were imposed of much the same kind as those enjoined in the Roman Catholic Church. There were two remarkable peculiarities in the Aztec ceremony. The first was, that, as the repetition of an offence once atoned for was deemed inexpiable, confession was made but once in a man's life, and was usually deferred to a late period of it, when the penitent unburdened his conscience and settled at once the long arrears of iniquity.* Another peculiarity was, that priestly absolution

[16] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, ubi supra.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 9, cap. 25.—Gomara, Crón., ap. Barcia, ubi supra.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 14, 17.

* [So, in the fourth century, the Roman Emperor Constantine deferred his baptism until he felt that his end was approaching.—M.]

was received in place of the legal punishment of offences, and authorized an acquittal in case of arrest. Long after the Conquest, the simple natives, when they came under the arm of the law, sought to escape by producing the certificate of their confession.[17]

One of the most important duties of the priesthood was that of education, to which certain buildings were appropriated within the enclosure of the principal temple. Here the youth of both sexes, of the higher and middling orders, were placed at a very tender age. The girls were intrusted to the care of priestesses; for women were allowed to exercise sacerdotal functions, except those of sacrifice.[18] In these institutions the boys were drilled

[17] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 1, cap. 12; lib. 6, cap. 7. —The address of the confessor, on these occasions, contains some things too remarkable to be omitted. "O merciful Lord," he says, in his prayer, "thou who knowest the secrets of all hearts, let thy forgiveness and favor descend, like the pure waters of heaven, to wash away the stains from the soul. Thou knowest that this poor man *has sinned, not from his own free will,* but from the influence of the sign under which he was born." After a copious exhortation to the penitent, enjoining a variety of mortifications and minute ceremonies by way of penance, and particularly urging the necessity of instantly procuring *a slave for sacrifice* to the Deity, the priest concludes with inculcating charity to the poor. "Clothe the naked and feed the hungry, whatever privations it may cost thee; for remember, *their flesh is like thine, and they are men like thee.*" Such is the strange medley of truly Christian benevolence and heathenish abominations which pervades the Aztec litany,—intimating sources widely different.

[18] The Egyptian gods were also served by priestesses. (See Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 54.) Tales of scandal similar to those which the Greeks circulated respecting them, have been told of the Aztec virgins. (See Le Noir's dissertation, ap. Antiquités Mexicaines (Paris, 1834), tom. ii. p. 7, note.) The early missionaries, credulous enough certainly, give no countenance to such reports; and Father Acosta, on the contrary, exclaims, "In truth, it is very strange to see that this false opinion of religion hath so great force among these yoong men

in the routine of monastic discipline; they decorated the shrines of the gods with flowers, fed the sacred fires, and took part in the religious chants and festivals. Those in the higher school—the *Calmecac,* as it was called—were initiated in their traditionary lore, the mysteries of hieroglyphics, the principles of government, and such branches of astronomical and natural science as were within the compass of the priesthood. The girls learned various feminine employments, especially to weave and embroider rich coverings for the altars of the gods. Great attention was paid to the moral discipline of both sexes. The most perfect decorum prevailed; and offences were punished with extreme rigor, in some instances with death itself. Terror, not love, was the spring of education with the Aztecs.[19]

At a suitable age for marrying, or for entering into the world, the pupils were dismissed, with much ceremony, from the convent, and the recommendation of the principal often introduced those most competent to responsible situations in public life. Such was the crafty policy

and maidens of Mexico, that they will serve the Divell with so great rigor and austerity, which many of us doe not in the service of the most high God; the which is a great shame and confusion." Eng. trans., lib. 5, cap. 16.

[19] Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 9.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, Apend.; lib. 3, cap. 4–8.—Zurita, Rapport, pp. 123–126.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 15, 16.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 9, cap. 11–14, 30, 31.—"They were taught," says the good father last cited, "to eschew vice, and cleave to virtue,—*according to their notions of them;* namely, to abstain from wrath to offer violence and do wrong to no man,—in short, to perform the duties plainly pointed out by natural religion."

of the Mexican priests, who, by reserving to themselves the business of instruction, were enabled to mould the young and plastic mind according to their own wills, and to train it early to implicit reverence for religion and its ministers; a reverence which still maintained its hold on the iron nature of the warrior, long after every other vestige of education had been effaced by the rough trade to which he was devoted.

To each of the principal temples, lands were annexed for the maintenance of the priests. These estates were augmented by the policy or devotion of successive princes, until, under the last Montezuma, they had swollen to an enormous extent, and covered every district of the empire. The priests took the management of their property into their own hands; and they seem to have treated their tenants with the liberality and indulgence characteristic of monastic corporations. Besides the large supplies drawn from this source, the religious order was enriched with the first-fruits, and such other offerings as piety or superstition dictated. The surplus beyond what was required for the support of the national worship was distributed in alms among the poor; a duty strenuously prescribed by their moral code. Thus we find the same religion inculcating lessons of pure philanthropy, on the one hand, and of merciless extermination, as we shall soon see, on the other. The inconsistency will not appear incredible to those who are familiar with the history of the Roman

Catholic Church, in the early ages of the Inquisition.[20]

The Mexican temples—*teocallis,* "houses of God," as they were called *—were very numerous. There were several hundreds in each of the principal cities, many of them, doubtless, very humble edifices. They were solid masses of earth, cased with brick or stone, and in their form somewhat resembled the pyramidal structures of ancient Egypt. The bases of many of them were more than a hundred feet square, and they towered to a still greater height. They were distributed into four or five stories, each of smaller dimensions than that below. The ascent was by a flight of steps, at an angle of the pyramid, on the outside. This led to a sort of terrace, or gallery, at the base of the second story, which passed quite round the building to another flight of stairs, commencing also at the same angle as the preceding and directly over it, and leading to a similar terrace; so

[20] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 8, cap. 20, 21.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—It is impossible not to be struck with the great resemblance, not merely in a few empty forms, but in the whole way of life, of the Mexican and Egyptian priesthood. Compare Herodotus (Euterpe, passim) and Diodorus (lib. 1, sec. 73, 81). The English reader may consult, for the same purpose, Heeren (Hist. Res., vol. v. chap. 2), Wilkinson (Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians (London, 1837), vol. i. pp. 257–279), the last writer especially,—who has contributed, more than all others, towards opening to us the interior of the social life of this interesting people.

* [Humboldt has noticed the curious similarity of the word *teocalli* with the Greek compound—actual or possible—*θεόκαλία*; and Buschmann observes, "Die Ubereinstimmung des mex. teotl und *θεός*, arithmetisch sehr hoch anzuschlagen wegen des Doppelvocals, zeigt wie weit es der Zufall in Wortähnlichkeiten zwischen ganz verschiedenen Sprachen bringen kann." Uber die aztekischen Ortsnamen, S. 627.—K.]

that one had to make the circuit of the temple several times, before reaching the summit. In some instances the stairway led directly up the centre of the western face of the building. The top was a broad area, on which were erected one or two towers, forty or fifty feet high, the sanctuaries in which stood the sacred images of the presiding deities. Before these towers stood the dreadful stone of sacrifice, and two lofty altars, on which fires were kept, as inextinguishable as those in the temple of Vesta. There were said to be six hundred of these altars, on smaller buildings within the enclosure of the great temple of Mexico, which, with those on the sacred edifices in other parts of the city, shed a brilliant illumination over its streets, through the darkest night.[21] *

From the construction of their temples, all religious services were public. The long processions of priests, winding round their massive sides, as they rose higher and higher towards the summit, and the dismal rites of sacrifice performed there, were all visible from the remotest corners of the capital, impressing on the spectator's mind a su-

[21] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 13.—Gomara, Crón., cap. 80, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—This last writer, who visited Mexico immediately after the Conquest, in 1521, assures us that some of the smaller temples, or pyramids, were filled with earth impregnated with odoriferous gums and gold dust; the latter sometimes in such quantities as probably to be worth a million of *castellanos!* (Ubi supra.) These were the temples of Mammon, indeed! But I find no confirmation of such golden reports.

* [The *teocallis* could be used as fortresses, as the Spaniards ascertained to their sorrow.]

perstitious veneration for the mysteries of his religion, and for the dread ministers by whom they were interpreted.

This impression was kept in full force by their numerous festivals. Every month was consecrated to some protecting deity; and every week, nay, almost every day, was set down in their calendar for some appropriate celebration; so that it is difficult to understand how the ordinary business of life could have been compatible with the exactions of religion. Many of their ceremonies were of a light and cheerful complexion, consisting of the national songs and dances, in which both sexes joined. Processions were made of women and children crowned with garlands and bearing offerings of fruits, the ripened maize, or the sweet incense of copal and other odoriferous gums, while the altars of the deity were stained with no blood save that of animals.[22] These were the peaceful rites derived from their Toltec predecessors, on which the fierce Aztecs engrafted a superstition too loathsome to be exhibited in all its nakedness, and one over which I would gladly draw a veil altogether, but that it would leave the reader in ignorance of their most striking institution, and one that had the greatest influence in forming the national character.

Human sacrifices were adopted by the Aztecs early in the fourteenth century, about two hundred

[22] Cod. Tel.-Rem., Pl. 1, and Cod. Vat., passim, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vols. i., vi.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 10, et seq. —Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, passim.—Among the offerings, quails may be particularly noticed, for the incredible quantities of them sacrificed and consumed at many of the festivals.

years before the Conquest.[23] Rare at first, they became more frequent with the wider extent of their empire; till, at length, almost every festival was closed with this cruel abomination. These religious ceremonials were generally arranged in such a manner as to afford a type of the most prominent circumstances in the character or history of the deity who was the object of them. A single example will suffice.

One of their most important festivals was that in honor of the god Tezcatlipoca,* whose rank was inferior only to that of the Supreme Being. He was called "the soul of the world," and supposed to have been its creator. He was depicted as a handsome man, endowed with perpetual youth. A year before the intended sacrifice, a captive, distinguished for his personal beauty, and without a blemish on his body, was selected to represent this deity. Certain tutors took charge of him, and in-

[23] The traditions of their origin have somewhat of a fabulous tinge. But, whether true or false, they are equally indicative of unparalleled ferocity in the people who could be the subject of them. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 167, et seq.; also Humboldt (who does not appear to doubt them), Vues des Cordillères, p. 95.

* [According to Payne, New World Called America, i. p. 78, Tezcatlipoca, or *Fiery Mirror,* was so called because of the shield of polished metal which was almost always a conspicuous adjunct of the idol which represented him. Probably the correct form of his name is Tezcatlipopoca, or Fiery Smoking Mirror. He had many names: "Night Wind,"—"whose servants we are,"—"The Impatient,"—"The Provident Disposer,"—"who does what he will." His best-known appellation was Telpochtli, or "Youthful Warrior," because his vital force was never diminished. He was also called the "Enemy," and the "Hungry Chief."—He always had a living representative; when one was sacrificed another took his place, and this representative was invested with the dress, functions, and attributes of the God himself.—M.]

structed him how to perform his new part with becoming grace and dignity. He was arrayed in a splendid dress, regaled with incense and with a profusion of sweet-scented flowers, of which the ancient Mexicans were as fond as their descendants at the present day. When he went abroad, he was attended by a train of the royal pages, and, as he halted in the streets to play some favorite melody, the crowd prostrated themselves before him, and did him homage as the representative of their good deity. In this way he led an easy, luxurious life, till within a month of his sacrifice. Four beautiful girls, bearing the names of the principal goddesses, were then selected to share the honors of his bed; and with them he continued to live in idle dalliance, feasted at the banquets of the principal nobles, who paid him all the honors of a divinity.

At length the fatal day of sacrifice arrived. The term of his short-lived glories was at an end. He was stripped of his gaudy apparel, and bade adieu to the fair partners of his revelries. One of the royal barges transported him across the lake to a temple which rose on its margin, about a league from the city. Hither the inhabitants of the capital flocked, to witness the consummation of the ceremony. As the sad procession wound up the sides of the pyramid, the unhappy victim threw away his gay chaplets of flowers, and broke in pieces the musical instruments with which he had solaced the hours of captivity. On the summit he was received by six priests, whose long and matted locks flowed disorderly over their sable robes, covered with hieroglyphic scrolls of mystic import.

They led him to the sacrificial stone, a huge block of jasper, with its upper surface somewhat convex. On this the prisoner was stretched. Five priests secured his head and his limbs; while the sixth, clad in a scarlet mantle, emblematic of his bloody office, dexterously opened the breast of the wretched victim with a sharp razor of *itztli*,—a volcanic substance, hard as flint,—and, inserting his hand in the wound, tore out the palpitating heart. The minister of death, first holding this up towards the sun, an object of worship throughout Anahuac, cast it at the feet of the deity to whom the temple was devoted, while the multitudes below prostrated themselves in humble adoration. The tragic story of this prisoner was expounded by the priests as the type of human destiny, which, brilliant in its commencement, too often closes in sorrow and disaster.[24]

Such was the form of human sacrifice usually practised by the Aztecs. It was the same that often met the indignant eyes of the Europeans in their progress through the country, and from the dreadful doom of which they themselves were not exempted. There were, indeed, some occasions when preliminary tortures, of the most exquisite kind,—with which it is unnecessary to shock the

[24] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 2, 5, 24, et alibi.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 2, cap. 16.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 7, cap. 19; lib. 10, cap. 14.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.—Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 9–21.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Relacion por el Regimiento de Vera Cruz (Julio, 1519), MS.—Few readers, probably, will sympathize with the sentence of Torquemada, who concludes his tale of woe by coolly dismissing "the soul of the victim, to sleep with those of his false gods, in hell!" Lib. 10, cap. 23.

reader,—were inflicted, but they always terminated with the bloody ceremony above described. It should be remarked, however, that such tortures were not the spontaneous suggestions of cruelty, as with the North American Indians, but were all rigorously prescribed in the Aztec ritual, and doubtless were often inflicted with the same compunctious visitings which a devout familiar of the Holy Office might at times experience in executing its stern decrees.[25] Women, as well as the other sex, were sometimes reserved for sacrifice. On some occasions, particularly in seasons of drought, at the festival of the insatiable Tlaloc, the god of rain, children, for the most part infants, were offered up. As they were borne along in open litters, dressed in their festal robes, and decked with the fresh blossoms of spring, they moved the hardest heart to pity, though their cries were drowned in the wild chant of the priests, who read in their tears a favorable augury for their petition. These innocent victims were generally bought by the

[25] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 10, 29.—Gomara, Crón., cap. 219, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 6-11.—The reader will find a tolerably exact picture of the nature of these tortures in the twenty-first canto of the "Inferno." The fantastic creations of the Florentine poet were nearly realized, at the very time he was writing, by the barbarians of an unknown world. One sacrifice, of a less revolting character, deserves to be mentioned. The Spaniards called it the "gladiatorial sacrifice," and it may remind one of the bloody games of antiquity. A captive of distinction was sometimes furnished with arms, and brought against a number of Mexicans in succession. If he defeated them all, as did occasionally happen, he was allowed to escape. If vanquished, he was dragged to the block and sacrificed in the usual manner. The combat was fought on a huge circular stone, before the assembled capital. Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 21.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.

priests of parents who were poor, but who stifled the voice of nature, probably less at the suggestions of poverty than of a wretched superstition.[26]

The most loathsome part of the story—the manner in which the body of the sacrificed captive was disposed of—remains yet to be told. It was delivered to the warrior who had taken him in battle, and by him, after being dressed, was served up in an entertainment to his friends. This was not the coarse repast of famished cannibals, but a banquet teeming with delicious beverages and delicate viands, prepared with art, and attended by both sexes, who, as we shall see hereafter, conducted themselves with all the decorum of civilized life. Surely, never were refinement and the extreme of barbarism brought so closely in contact with each other.[27]

Human sacrifices have been practised by many nations, not excepting the most polished nations of antiquity;[28] but never by any, on a scale to be com-

[26] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 1, 4, 21, et alibi.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 10.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 76, 82.

[27] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 7, cap. 19.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 2, cap. 17.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 2, cap. 21, et alibi.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 2.

[28] To say nothing of Egypt, where, notwithstanding the indications on the monuments, there is strong reason for doubting it. (Comp. Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 45.) It was of frequent occurrence among the Greeks, as every schoolboy knows. In Rome, it was so common as to require to be interdicted by an express law, less than a hundred years before the Christian era,—a law recorded in a very honest strain of exultation by Pliny (Hist. Nat., lib. 30, sec. 3, 4); notwithstanding which, traces of the existence of the practice may be discerned to a much later period. See, among others, Horace, Epod., In Canidiam.

pared with those in Anahuac. The amount of victims immolated on its accursed altars would stagger the faith of the least scrupulous believer. Scarcely any author pretends to estimate the yearly sacrifices throughout the empire at less than twenty thousand, and some carry the number as high as fifty thousand![29]

On great occasions, as the coronation of a king or the consecration of a temple, the number becomes still more appalling. At the dedication of the great temple of Huitzilopochtli, in 1486, the prisoners, who for some years had been reserved for the purpose, were drawn from all quarters to the capital. They were ranged in files, forming a procession nearly two miles long. The ceremony consumed several days, and seventy thousand captives are said to have perished at the shrine of this terrible deity! But who can believe that so numerous a body would have suffered themselves to be led unresistingly like sheep to the slaughter? Or how could their remains, too great for consumption in

[29] See Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 49.—Bishop Zumárraga, in a letter written a few years after the Conquest, states that 20,000 victims were yearly slaughtered in the capital. Torquemada turns this into 20,000 *infants*. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 7, cap. 21.) Herrera, following Acosta, says 20,000 victims on a specified day of the year, throughout the kingdom. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 2, cap. 16.) Clavigero, more cautious, infers that this number may have been sacrificed annually throughout Anahuac. (Ubi supra.) Las Casas, however, in his reply to Sepulveda's assertion, that no one who had visited the New World put the number of yearly sacrifices at less than 20,000, declares that "this is the estimate of brigands, who wish to find an apology for their own atrocities, and that the real number was not above 50"! (Œuvres, ed. Llorente (Paris, 1822), tom. i. pp. 365, 386.) Probably the good Bishop's arithmetic here, as in most other instances, came more from his heart than his head. With such loose and contradictory data, it is clear that any specific number is mere conjecture, undeserving the name of calculation.

FRA BARTOLOMÉ DE LAS CASAS

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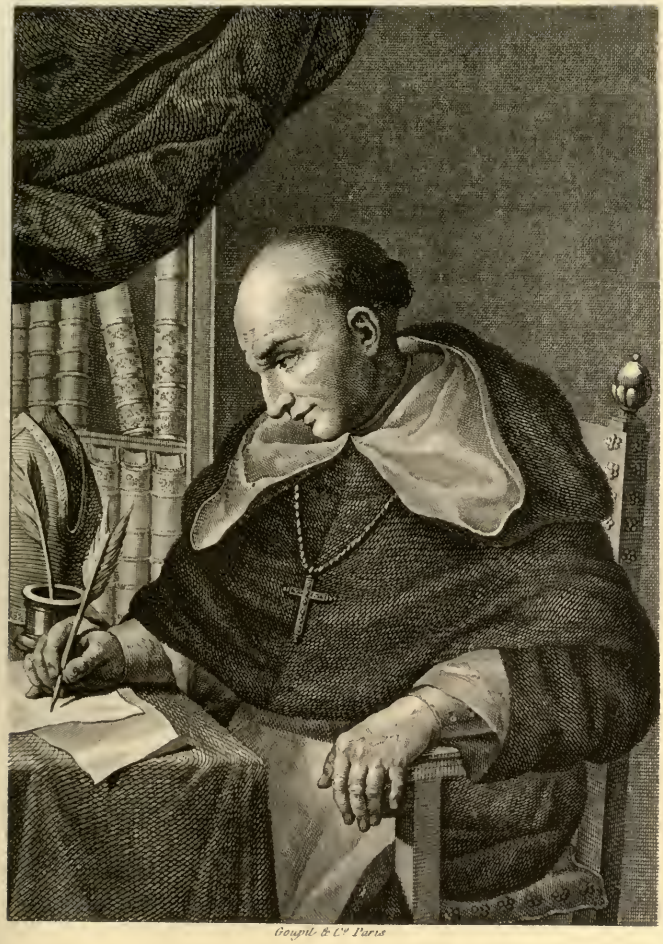

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the ordinary way, be disposed of, without breeding a pestilence in the capital? Yet the event was of recent date, and is unequivocally attested by the best-informed historians.[30] One fact may be considered certain. It was customary to preserve the skulls of the sacrificed, in buildings appropriated to the purpose. The companions of Cortés counted one hundred and thirty-six thousand in one of these edifices![31] Without attempting a precise calculation, therefore, it is safe to conclude that thousands were yearly offered up, in the different cities of Anahuac, on the bloody altars of the Mexican divinities.[32]

Indeed, the great object of war, with the Aztecs, was quite as much to gather victims for their sac-

[30] I am within bounds. Torquemada states the number, most precisely, at 72,344 (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 63); Ixtlilxochitl, with equal precision, at 80,400. (Hist. Chich., MS.) *¿Quien sabe?* The latter adds that the captives massacred in the capital, in the course of that memorable year, exceeded 100,000! (Loc. cit.) One, however, has to read but a little way, to find out that the science of numbers—at least where the party was not an eyewitness—is anything but an exact science with these ancient chroniclers. The Codex Telleriano-Remensis, written some fifty years after the Conquest, reduces the amount to 20,000. (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 19; vol. vi. p. 141, Eng. note.) Even this hardly warrants the Spanish interpreter in calling king Ahuitzotl a man "of a mild and moderate disposition," *templada y benigna condicion!* Ibid., vol. v. p. 49.

[31] Gomara states the number on the authority of two soldiers, whose names he gives, who took the trouble to count the grinning horrors in one of these Golgothas, where they were so arranged as to produce the most hideous effect. The existence of these conservatories is attested by every writer of the time.

[32] The "Anonymous Conqueror" assures us, as a fact beyond dispute, that the Devil introduced himself into the bodies of the idols, and persuaded the silly priests that his only diet was human hearts! It furnishes a very satisfactory solution, to his mind, of the frequency of sacrifices in Mexico. Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.

rifices as to extend their empire. Hence it was that an enemy was never slain in battle, if there were a chance of taking him alive. To this circumstance the Spaniards repeatedly owed their preservation. When Montezuma was asked "why he had suffered the republic of Tlascala to maintain her independence on his borders," he replied, "that she might furnish him with victims for his gods"! As the supply began to fail, the priests, the Dominicans of the New World, bellowed aloud for more, and urged on their superstitious sovereign by the denunciations of celestial wrath. Like the militant churchmen of Christendom in the Middle Ages, they mingled themselves in the ranks, and were conspicuous in the thickest of the fight, by their hideous aspect and frantic gestures. Strange, that, in every country, the most fiendish passions of the human heart have been those kindled in the name of religion![33]

The influence of these practices on the Aztec character was as disastrous as might have been ex-

[33] The Tezcucan priests would fain have persuaded the good king Nezahualcoyotl, on occasion of a pestilence, to appease the gods by the sacrifice of some of his own subjects, instead of his enemies; on the ground that they would not only be obtained more easily, but would be fresher victims, and more acceptable. (Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 41.) This writer mentions a cool arrangement entered into by the allied monarchs with the republic of Tlascala and her confederates. A battle-field was marked out, on which the troops of the hostile nations were to engage at stated seasons, and thus supply themselves with subjects for sacrifice. The victorious party was not to pursue his advantage by invading the other's territory, and they were to continue, in all other respects, on the most amicable footing. (Ubi supra.) The historian, who follows in the track of the Tezcucan Chronicler, may often find occasion to shelter himself, like Ariosto, with

"Mettendolo Turpin, lo metto anch' io."

pected. Familiarity with the bloody rites of sacrifice steeled the heart against human sympathy, and begat a thirst for carnage, like that excited in the Romans by the exhibitions of the circus. The perpetual recurrence of ceremonies, in which the people took part, associated religion with their most intimate concerns, and spread the gloom of superstition over the domestic hearth, until the character of the nation wore a grave and even melancholy aspect, which belongs to their descendants at the present day. The influence of the priesthood, of course, became unbounded. The sovereign thought himself honored by being permitted to assist in the services of the temple. Far from limiting the authority of the priests to spiritual matters, he often surrendered his opinion to theirs, where they were least competent to give it. It was their opposition that prevented the final capitulation which would have saved the capital. The whole nation, from the peasant to the prince, bowed their necks to the worst kind of tyranny, that of a blind fanaticism.

In reflecting on the revolting usages recorded in the preceding pages, one finds it difficult to reconcile their existence with anything like a regular form of government, or an advance in civilization.[34] Yet the Mexicans had many claims to the

[34] [Don José F. Ramirez, the distinguished Mexican scholar, has made this sentence the text for a disquisition of fifty pages or more, one object of which is to show that the existence of human sacrifices is not irreconcilable with an advance in civilization. This leads him into an argument of much length, covering a broad range of historical inquiry, and displaying much learning as well as a careful consideration of the subject. In one respect, however, he has been led into an important error by misunderstanding the drift of my remarks, where, speaking of cannibalism, I say, "It is impossible

character of a civilized community. One may, perhaps, better understand the anomaly, by reflecting on the condition of some of the most polished countries in Europe in the sixteenth century, after the establishment of the modern Inquisition,—an institution which yearly destroyed its thousands, by a death more painful than the Aztec sacrifices; which armed the hand of brother against brother, and, setting its burning seal upon the lip, did more to stay the march of improvement than any other scheme ever devised by human cunning.

Human sacrifice, however cruel, has nothing in it degrading to its victim. It may be rather said to ennoble him by devoting him to the gods. Although so terrible with the Aztecs, it was sometimes voluntarily embraced by them, as the most glorious death and one that opened a sure passage into

the people who practise it should make any great progress in moral or intellectual culture" (p. 100). This observation, referring solely to cannibalism, the critic cites as if applied by me to human sacrifices. Whatever force, therefore, his reasoning may have in respect to the latter, it cannot be admitted to apply to the former. The distance is wide between human sacrifices and cannibalism; though Señor Ramirez diminishes this distance by regarding both one and the other simply as religious exercises, springing from the devotional principle in our nature.* He enforces his views by a multitude of examples from history, which show how extensively these revolting usages of the Aztecs—on a much less gigantic scale indeed—have been practised by the primitive races of the Old World, some of whom, at a later period, made high advances in civilization. Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos á la Historia del Conquista de México del Señor W. Prescott, appended to Navarro's translation.]

* [The practise of eating, or tasting, the victim has been generally associated with sacrifice, from the idea either of the sacredness of the offering or of the deity's accepting the soul, the immaterial part, or the blood as containing the principle of life and leaving the flesh to his worshippers.—K.]

paradise.[35] The Inquisition, on the other hand, branded its victims with infamy in this world, and consigned them to everlasting perdition in the next.

One detestable feature of the Aztec superstition, however, sunk it far below the Christian. This was its cannibalism,* though, in truth, the Mexicans were not cannibals in the coarsest acceptation of the term. They did not feed on human flesh merely to gratify a brutish appetite, but in obedience to their religion. Their repasts were made of the victims whose blood had been poured out on the altar of sacrifice. This is a distinction worthy of notice.[36] Still, cannibalism, under any form or whatever sanction, cannot but have a fatal influence on the nation addicted to it. It suggests ideas so loathsome, so degrading to man, to his spiritual

[35] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 307.—Among other instances is that of Chimalpopoca, third king of Mexico, who doomed himself, with a number of his lords, to this death, to wipe off an indignity offered him by a brother monarch. (Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 28.) This was the law of honor with the Aztecs.

[36] Voltaire, doubtless, intends this, when he says, "Ils n'étaient point anthropophages, comme un très-petit nombre de peuplades Américaines." (Essai sur les Mœurs, chap. 147.)

* ["The advancement of Mexico rested for support on . . . a system of perpetual war, remorselessly maintained against neighboring peoples, ostensibly to procure victims for sacrifice, but really to provide animal food for consumption by the privileged class engaged in it; and the religious ritual had been so expanded as to ensure for them, by a sacred and permanent sanction, an almost continuous cannibal carnival." Payne, New World Called America, vol. i. p. 500. Mr. Payne shows that this continuous cannibalism prevailed because Anahuac possessed no large animals capable of furnishing a regular food supply. "Organized cannibalism, fortified by its religious sanction, was in fact a natural if not a necessary outgrowth of circumstances."—M.]

and immortal nature, that it is impossible the people who practise it should make any great progress in moral or intellectual culture. The Mexicans furnish no exception to this remark. The civilization which they possessed descended from the Toltecs, a race who never stained their altars, still less their banquets, with the blood of man.[37] All that deserved the name of science in Mexico came from this source; and the crumbling ruins of edifices attributed to them, still extant in various parts of New Spain, show a decided superiority in their architecture over that of the later races of Anahuac. It is true, the Mexicans made great proficiency in many of the social and mechanic arts, in that material culture,—if I may so call it,—the natural growth of increasing opulence, which ministers to the gratification of the senses. In purely intellectual progress they were behind the Tezcucans, whose wise sovereigns came into the abominable rites of their neighbors with reluctance and practised them on a much more moderate scale.[38]

[37] [The remark in the text admits of some qualification. According to an ancient Tezcucan chronicler, quoted by Señor Ramirez, the Toltecs celebrated occasionally the worship of the god Tlaloc with human sacrifices. The most important of these was the offering up once a year of five or six maidens, who were immolated in the usual horrid way of tearing out their hearts. It does not appear that the Toltecs consummated the sacrifice by devouring the flesh of the victim. This seems to have been the only exception to the blameless character of the Toltec rites. Tlaloc was the oldest deity in the Aztec mythology, in which he found a suitable place. Yet, as the knowledge of him was originally derived from the Toltecs, it cannot be denied that this people, as Ramirez says, possessed in their peculiar civilization the germs of those sanguinary institutions which existed on so appalling a scale in Mexico. See Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, ubi supra.]

[38] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 45, et alibi.

In this state of things, it was beneficently ordered by Providence that the land should be delivered over to another race, who would rescue it from the brutish superstitions that daily extended wider and wider with extent of empire.[39] The debasing institutions of the Aztecs furnish the best apology for their conquest. It is true, the conquerors brought along with them the Inquisition. But they also brought Christianity, whose benign radiance would still survive when the fierce flames of fanaticism should be extinguished; dispelling those dark forms of horror which had so long brooded over the fair region of Anahuac.

[39] No doubt the ferocity of character engendered by their sanguinary rites greatly facilitated their conquests. Machiavelli attributes to a similar cause, in part, the military successes of the Romans. (Discorsi sopra T. Livio, lib. 2, cap. 2.) The same chapter contains some ingenious reflections—much more ingenious than candid—on the opposite tendencies of Christianity.

* [" It was high time that an end should be put to those hecatombs of human victims, slashed, torn open, and devoured on all the little occasions of life. It sounds quite pithy to say that the Inquisition, as conducted in Mexico, was as great an evil as the human sacrifices and the cannibalism; but it is not true." Fiske, The Discovery of America, vol. ii. p. 293.—M.]

The most important authority in the preceding chapter, and, indeed, wherever the Aztec religion is concerned, is Bernardino de Sahagun, a Franciscan friar, contemporary with the Conquest. His great work, *Historia universal de Nueva-España,* has been recently printed for the first time. The circumstances attending its compilation and subsequent fate form one of the most remarkable passages in literary history.

Sahagun was born in a place of the same name, in old Spain. He was educated at Salamanca, and, having taken the vows of St. Francis, came over as a missionary to Mexico in the year 1529. Here he distinguished himself by his zeal, the purity of his life, and his unwearied exertions to spread the great truths of religion among the natives. He was the guardian of several conventual houses, successively, until he relinquished these cares, that he might devote himself

more unreservedly to the business of preaching, and of compiling various works designed to illustrate the antiquities of the Aztecs. For these literary labors he found some facilities in the situation which he continued to occupy, of reader, or lecturer, in the College of Santa Cruz, in the capital.

The "Universal History" was concocted in a singular manner. In order to secure to it the greatest possible authority, he passed some years in a Tezcucan town, where he conferred daily with a number of respectable natives unacquainted with Castilian. He propounded to them queries, which they, after deliberation, answered in their usual method of writing, by hieroglyphical paintings. These he submitted to other natives, who had been educated under his own eye in the College of Santa Cruz; and the latter, after a consultation among themselves, gave a written version, in the Mexican tongue, of the hieroglyphics. This process he repeated in another place, in some part of Mexico, and subjected the whole to a still further revision by a third body in another quarter. He finally arranged the combined results into a regular history, in the form it now bears; composing it in the Mexican language, which he could both write and speak with great accuracy and elegance,—greater, indeed, than any Spaniard of the time.

The work presented a mass of curious information, that attracted much attention among his brethren. But they feared its influence in keeping alive in the natives a too vivid reminiscence of the very superstitions which it was the great object of the Christian clergy to eradicate. Sahagun had views more liberal than those of his order, whose blind zeal would willingly have annihilated every monument of art and human ingenuity which had not been produced under the influence of Christianity. They refused to allow him the necessary aid to transcribe his papers, which he had been so many years in preparing, under the pretext that the expense was too great for their order to incur. This occasioned a further delay of several years. What was worse, his provincial got possession of his manuscripts, which were soon scattered among the different religious houses in the country.

In this forlorn state of his affairs, Sahagun drew up a brief statement of the nature and contents of his work, and forwarded it to Madrid. It fell into the hands of Don Juan de Ovando, president of the Council for the Indies, who was so much interested in it that he ordered the manuscripts to be restored to their author, with the request that he would at once set about translating them into Castilian. This was accordingly done. His papers were recovered, though not without the menace of ecclesiastical censures; and the octogenarian author began the work of translation from the Mexican, in which they had been originally written by him thirty years before. He had the satisfaction to complete the task, arranging the Spanish version in a parallel column with the original, and adding a vocabulary, explaining the difficult Aztec terms and phrases; while the text was supported by the numerous paintings on which it was founded. In

this form, making two bulky volumes in folio, it was sent to Madrid. There seemed now to be no further reason for postponing its publication, the importance of which could not be doubted. But from this moment it disappears; and we hear nothing further of it, for more than two centuries, except only as a valuable work, which had once existed and was probably buried in some one of the numerous cemeteries of learning in which Spain abounds.

At length, towards the close of the last century, the indefatigable Muñoz succeeded in disinterring the long-lost manuscript from the place tradition had assigned to it,—the library of a convent at Tolosa, in Navarre, the northern extremity of Spain. With his usual ardor, he transcribed the whole work with his own hands, and added it to the inestimable collection, of which, alas! he was destined not to reap the full benefit himself. From this transcript Lord Kingsborough was enabled to procure the copy which was published in 1830, in the sixth volume of his magnificent compilation. In it he expresses an honest satisfaction at being the first to give Sahagun's works to the world. But in this supposition he was mistaken. The very year preceding, an edition of it, with annotations, appeared in Mexico, in three volumes octavo. It was prepared by Bustamante,—a scholar to whose editorial activity his country is largely indebted,—from a copy of the Muñoz manuscript which came into his possession. Thus this remarkable work, which was denied the honors of the press during the author's lifetime, after passing into oblivion, reappeared, at the distance of nearly three centuries, not in his own country, but in foreign lands widely remote from each other, and that almost simultaneously. The story is extraordinary, though unhappily not so extraordinary in Spain as it would be elsewhere.

Sahagun divided his history into twelve books. The first eleven are occupied with the social institutions of Mexico, and the last with the Conquest. On the religion of the country he is particularly full. His great object evidently was, to give a clear view of its mythology, and of the burdensome ritual which belonged to it. Religion entered so intimately into the most private concerns and usages of the Aztecs, that Sahagun's work must be a text-book for every student of their antiquities. Torquemada availed himself of a manuscript copy, which fell into his hands before it was sent to Spain, to enrich his own pages,—a circumstance more fortunate for his readers than for Sahagun's reputation, whose work, now that it is published, loses much of the originality and interest which would otherwise attach to it. In one respect it is invaluable; as presenting a complete collection of the various forms of prayer, accommodated to every possible emergency, in use by the Mexicans. They are often clothed in dignified and beautiful language, showing that sublime speculative tenets are quite compatible with the most degrading practices of superstition. It is much to be regretted that we have not the eighteen hymns inserted by the author in his book, which would have particular interest, as the only specimen of devotional poetry pre-

served of the Aztecs. The hieroglyphical paintings, which accompanied the text, are also missing. If they have escaped the hands of fanaticism, both may reappear at some future day.

Sahagun produced several other works, of a religious or philological character. Some of these were voluminous, but none have been printed. He lived to a very advanced age, closing a life of activity and usefulness, in 1590, in the capital of Mexico. His remains were followed to the tomb by a numerous concourse of his own countrymen, and of the natives, who lamented in him the loss of unaffected piety, benevolence, and learning.

CHAPTER IV

MEXICAN HIEROGLYPHICS—MANUSCRIPTS—ARITHMETIC—CHRONOLOGY—ASTRONOMY

IT is a relief to turn from the gloomy pages of the preceding chapter to a brighter side of the picture, and to contemplate the same nation in its generous struggle to raise itself from a state of barbarism and to take a positive rank in the scale of civilization. It is not the less interesting, that these efforts were made on an entirely new theatre of action, apart from those influences that operate in the Old World; the inhabitants of which, forming one great brotherhood of nations, are knit together by sympathies that make the faintest spark of knowledge, struck out in one quarter, spread gradually wider and wider, until it has diffused a cheering light over the remotest. It is curious to observe the human mind, in this new position, conforming to the same laws as on the ancient continent, and taking a similar direction in its first inquiries after truth,—so similar, indeed, as, although not warranting, perhaps, the idea of imitation, to suggest at least that of a common origin.

In the Eastern hemisphere we find some nations, as the Greeks, for instance, early smitten with such a love of the beautiful as to be unwilling to dis-

pense with it even in the graver productions of science; and other nations, again, proposing a severer end to themselves, to which even imagination and elegant art were made subservient. The productions of such a people must be criticised, not by the ordinary rules of taste, but by their adaptation to the peculiar end for which they were designed. Such were the Egyptians in the Old World,[1] and the Mexicans in the New. We have already had occasion to notice the resemblance borne by the latter nation to the former in their religious economy. We shall be more struck with it in their scientific culture, especially their hieroglyphical writing and their astronomy.

To describe actions and events by delineating visible objects seems to be a natural suggestion, and is practised, after a certain fashion, by the rudest savages. The North American Indian carves an arrow on the bark of trees to show his followers the direction of his march, and some other sign to show the success of his expeditions. But to paint intelligibly a consecutive series of these actions—forming what Warburton has happily called *picture-writing*[2]—requires a combination of ideas

[1] "An Egyptian temple," says Denon, strikingly, "is an open volume, in which the teachings of science, morality, and the arts are recorded. Every thing seems to speak one and the same language, and breathes one and the same spirit." The passage is cited by Heeren, Hist. Res., vol. v. p. 178.

[2] Divine Legation, ap. Works (London, 1811), vol. iv. b. 4, sec. 4. —The Bishop of Gloucester, in his comparison of the various hieroglyphical systems of the world, shows his characteristic sagacity and boldness by announcing opinions little credited then, though since established. He affirmed the existence of an Egyptian alphabet, but was not aware of the phonetic property of hieroglyphics,—the great literary discovery of our age.

that amounts to a positively intellectual effort. Yet further, when the object of the painter, instead of being limited to the present, is to penetrate the past, and to gather from its dark recesses lessons of instruction for coming generations, we see the dawnings of a literary culture, and recognize the proof of a decided civilization in the attempt itself, however imperfectly it may be executed. The literal imitation of objects will not answer for this more complex and extended plan. It would occupy too much space, as well as time in the execution. It then becomes necessary to abridge the pictures, to confine the drawing to outlines, or to such prominent parts of the bodies delineated as may readily suggest the whole. This is the *representative* or *figurative* writing, which forms the lowest stage of hieroglyphics.

But there are things which have no type in the material world; abstract ideas, which can only be represented by visible objects supposed to have some quality analogous to the idea intended. This constitutes *symbolical* writing, the most difficult of all to the interpreter, since the analogy between the material and immaterial object is often purely fanciful, or local in its application. Who, for instance, could suspect the association which made a beetle represent the universe, as with the Egyptians, or a serpent typify time, as with the Aztecs?

The third and last division is the *phonetic,* in which signs are made to represent sounds, either entire words, or parts of them. This is the nearest approach of the hieroglyphical series to that beautiful invention, the alphabet, by which language is

resolved into its elementary sounds, and an apparatus supplied for easily and accurately expressing the most delicate shades of thought.

The Egyptians were well skilled in all three kinds of hieroglyphics. But, although their public monuments display the first class, in their ordinary intercourse and written records it is now certain that they almost wholly relied on the phonetic character. Strange that, having thus broken down the thin partition which divided them from an alphabet, their latest monuments should exhibit no nearer approach to it than their earliest.[3] The Aztecs, also, were acquainted with the several varieties of hieroglyphics. But they relied on the figurative infinitely more than on the others. The Egyptians were at the top of the scale, the Aztecs at the bottom.

In casting the eye over a Mexican manuscript, or map, as it is called, one is struck with the grotesque caricatures it exhibits of the human figure; monstrous, overgrown heads, on puny, misshapen bodies, which are themselves hard and angular in their outlines, and without the least skill in composition. On closer inspection, however, it is obvious that it is not so much a rude attempt to

[3] It appears that the hieroglyphics on the most recent monuments of Egypt contain no larger infusion of phonetic characters than those which existed eighteen centuries before Christ; showing no advance, in this respect, for twenty-two hundred years! (See Champollion, Précis du Système hiéroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens (Paris, 1824), pp. 242, 281.) It may seem more strange that the enchorial alphabet, so much more commodious, should not have been substituted. But the Egyptians were familiar with their hieroglyphics from infancy, which, moreover, took the fancies of the most illiterate, probably in the same manner as our children are attracted and taught by the picture-alphabets in an ordinary spelling-book.

delineate nature, as a conventional symbol, to express the idea in the most clear and forcible manner; in the same way as the pieces of similar value on a chess-board, while they correspond with one another in form, bear little resemblance, usually, to the objects they represent. Those parts of the figure are most distinctly traced which are the most important. So, also, the coloring, instead of the delicate gradations of nature, exhibits only gaudy and violent contrasts, such as may produce the most vivid impression. "For even colors," as Gama observes, "speak in the Aztec hieroglyphics." [4]

But in the execution of all this the Mexicans were much inferior to the Egyptians. The drawings of the latter, indeed, are exceedingly defective, when criticised by the rules of art; for they were as ignorant of perspective as the Chinese, and only exhibited the head in profile, with the eye in the centre, and with total absence of expression. But they handled the pencil more gracefully than the Aztecs, were more true to the natural forms of objects, and, above all, showed great superiority in abridging the original figure by giving only the outline, or some characteristic or essential feature. This simplified the process, and facilitated the communication of thought. An Egyptian text has almost the appearance of alphabetical writing in its regular lines of minute figures. A Mexican text looks usually like a collection of pictures, each one forming the subject of a separate study. This

[4] Descripcion histórica y cronológica de las Dos Piedras (México, 1832), Parte 2, p. 39.

is particularly the case with the delineations of mythology; in which the story is told by a conglomeration of symbols, that may remind one more of the mysterious anaglyphs sculptured on the temples of the Egyptians, than of their written records.

The Aztecs had various emblems for expressing such things as, from their nature, could not be directly represented by the painter; as, for example, the years, months, days, the seasons, the elements, the heavens, and the like. A "tongue" denoted speaking; a "footprint," travelling; a "man sitting on the ground," an earthquake. These symbols were often very arbitrary, varying with the caprice of the writer; and it requires a nice discrimination to interpret them, as a slight change in the form or position of the figure intimated a very different meaning.[5] An ingenious writer asserts that the priests devised secret symbolic characters for the record of their religious mysteries. It is possible. But the researches of Champollion lead to the conclusion that the similar opinion formerly entertained respecting the Egyptian hieroglyphics is without foundation.[6]

Lastly, they employed, as above stated, phonetic

[5] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 32, 44.—Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 7.—The continuation of Gama's work, recently edited by Bustamante, in Mexico, contains, among other things, some interesting remarks on the Aztec hieroglyphics. The editor has rendered a good service by this further publication of the writings of this estimable scholar, who has done more than any of his countrymen to explain the mysteries of Aztec science.

[6] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, p. 32.—Warburton, with his usual penetration, rejects the idea of mystery in the figurative hieroglyphics. (Divine Legation, b. 4, sec. 4.) If there was any mystery reserved for the initiated, Champollion thinks it may have been the

signs, though these were chiefly confined to the names of persons and places; which, being derived from some circumstance or characteristic quality, were accommodated to the hieroglyphical system. Thus, the town *Cimatlan* was compounded of *cimatl,* a " root," which grew near it, and *tlan,* signifying " near; " *Tlaxcallan* meant " the place of bread," from its rich fields of corn; *Huexotzinco,* " a place surrounded by willows." The names of persons were often significant of their adventures and achievements. That of the great Tezcucan prince Nezahualcoyotl signified " hungry fox," intimating his sagacity, and his distresses in early life.[7] The emblems of such names were no sooner seen, than they suggested to every Mexican the person and place intended, and, when painted on their shields or embroidered on their banners, became the armorial bearings by which city and chieftain were distinguished, as in Europe in the age of chivalry.[8]

But, although the Aztecs were instructed in all the varieties of hieroglyphical painting, they chiefly resorted to the clumsy method of direct representation. Had their empire lasted, like the

system of the anaglyphs. (Précis, p. 360.) Why may not this be true, likewise, of the monstrous symbolical combinations which represented the Mexican deities?

[7] Boturini, Idea, pp. 77–83.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 34–43.—Heeren is not aware, or does not allow, that the Mexicans used phonetic characters of any kind. (Hist. Res., vol. v. p. 45.) They, indeed, reversed the usual order of proceeding, and, instead of adapting the hieroglyphic to the name of the object, accommodated the name of the object to the hieroglyphic. This, of course, could not admit of great extension. We find phonetic characters, however, applied in some instances to common as well as proper names.

[8] Boturini, Idea, ubi supra.

Egyptian, several thousand years, instead of the brief space of two hundred, they would doubtless, like them, have advanced to the more frequent use of the phonetic writing. But, before they could be made acquainted with the capabilities of their own system, the Spanish Conquest, by introducing the European alphabet, supplied their scholars with a more perfect contrivance for expressing thought, which soon supplanted the ancient pictorial character.[9]

Clumsy as it was, however, the Aztec picture-writing seems to have been adequate to the demands of the nation, in their imperfect state of civilization. By means of it were recorded all their laws, and even their regulations for domestic economy; their tribute-rolls, specifying the imposts of the various towns; their mythology, calendars, and rituals; their political annals, carried back to a period long before the foundation of the city. They digested a complete system of chronology, and could specify with accuracy the dates of the most important events in their history; the year being inscribed on the margin, against the particular circumstance recorded. It is true, history, thus executed, must necessarily be vague and fragmentary. Only a few leading incidents could be presented. But in this it did not differ much from the monkish chronicles of the dark ages, which often dispose of years in a few brief sen-

[9] Clavigero has given a catalogue of the Mexican historians of the sixteenth century,—some of whom are often cited in this history,—which bears honorable testimony to the literary ardor and intelligence of the native races. Stor. del Messico, tom. i., Pref.—Also, Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, passim.

tences,—quite long enough for the annals of barbarians.[10]

In order to estimate aright the picture-writing of the Aztecs, one must regard it in connection with oral tradition, to which it was auxiliary. In the colleges of the priests the youth were instructed in astronomy, history, mythology, etc.; and those who were to follow the profession of hieroglyphical painting were taught the application of the characters appropriated to each of these branches. In an historical work, one had charge of the chronology, another of the events. Every part of the labor was thus mechanically distributed.[11] The pupils, instructed in all that was before known in their several departments, were prepared to extend still further the boundaries of their imperfect science. The hieroglyphics served as a sort of

[10] M. de Humboldt's remark, that the Aztec annals, from the close of the eleventh century, "exhibit the greatest method and astonishing minuteness" (Vues des Cordillères, p. 137), must be received with some qualification. The reader would scarcely understand from it that there are rarely more than one or two facts recorded in any year, and sometimes not one in a dozen or more. The necessary looseness and uncertainty of these historical records are made apparent by the remarks of the Spanish interpreter of the Mendoza Codex, who tells us that the natives, to whom it was submitted, were very long in coming to an agreement about the proper signification of the paintings. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 87.

[11] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, p. 30.—Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 7.—"Tenian para cada género," says Ixtlilxochitl, "sus Escritores, unos que trataban de los Anales, poniendo por su órden las cosas que acaecian en cada un año, con dia, mes, y hora; otros tenian á su cargo las Genealogías, y descendencia de los Reyes, Señores, y Personas de linaje, asentando por cuenta y razon los que nacian, y borraban los que morian con la misma cuenta. Unos tenian cuidado de las pinturas, de los términos, límites, y mojoneras de las Ciudades, Provincias, Pueblos, y Lugares, y de las suertes, y repartimiento de las tierras cuyas eran, y á quien pertenecian; otros de los libros de Leyes, ritos, y ceremonias que usaban." Hist. Chich., MS., Prólogo.

stenography, a collection of notes, suggesting to the initiated much more than could be conveyed by a literal interpretation. This combination of the written and the oral comprehended what may be called the literature of the Aztecs.[12]

Their manuscripts were made of different materials,—of cotton cloth, or skins nicely prepared; of a composition of silk and gum; but, for the most part, of a fine fabric from the leaves of the aloe, *agave Americana,* called by the natives *maguey,* which grows luxuriantly over the table-lands of Mexico. A sort of paper was made from it, resembling somewhat the Egyptian *papyrus,*[13] which, when properly dressed and polished, is said to have been more soft and beautiful than parchment. Some of the specimens, still existing, exhibit their original freshness, and the paintings on them retain their brilliancy of colors. They were sometimes

[12] According to Boturini, the ancient Mexicans were acquainted with the Peruvian method of recording events by means of the *quippus,*—knotted strings of various colors,—which were afterwards superseded by hieroglyphical painting. (Idea, p. 86.) He could discover, however, but a single specimen, which he met with in Tlascala, and that had nearly fallen to pieces with age. McCulloh suggests that it may have been only a wampum belt, such as is common among our North American Indians. (Researches, p. 201.) The conjecture is plausible enough. Strings of wampum, of various colors, were used by the latter people for the similar purpose of registering events. The insulated fact, recorded by Boturini, is hardly sufficient—unsupported, so far as I know, by any other testimony—to establish the existence of *quippus* among the Aztecs, who had but little in common with the Peruvians.

[13] Pliny, who gives a minute account of the *papyrus* reed of Egypt, notices the various manufactures obtained from it, as ropes, cloth, paper, etc. It also served as a thatch for the roofs of houses, and as food and drink for the natives. (Hist. Nat., lib. 11, cap. 20–22.) It is singular that the American *agave,* a plant so totally different, should also have been applied to all these various uses.

done up into rolls, but more frequently into volumes, of moderate size, in which the paper was shut up, like a folding screen, with a leaf or tablet of wood at each extremity, that gave the whole, when closed, the appearance of a book. The length of the strips was determined only by convenience. As the pages might be read and referred to separately, this form had obvious advantages over the rolls of the ancients.[14]

At the time of the arrival of the Spaniards, great quantities of these manuscripts were treasured up in the country. Numerous persons were employed in painting, and the dexterity of their operations excited the astonishment of the Conquerors. Unfortunately, this was mingled with other and unworthy feelings. The strange, unknown characters inscribed on them excited suspicion. They were looked on as magic scrolls, and were regarded in the same light with the idols and temples, as the symbols of a pestilent superstition, that must be extirpated. The first archbishop of Mexico, Don Juan de Zumárraga,—a name that should be as immortal as that of Omar,—collected these paintings from every quarter, especially from Tezcuco, the most cultivated capital in Anahuac, and the

[14] Lorenzana, Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 8.—Boturini, Idea, p. 96.—Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 52.—Peter Martyr Anglerius, De Orbe Novo (Compluti, 1530), dec. 3, cap. 8; dec. 5, cap 10.—Martyr has given a minute description of the Indian maps sent home soon after the invasion of New Spain. His inquisitive mind was struck with the evidence they afforded of a positive civilization. Ribera, the friend of Cortés, brought back a story that the paintings were designed as patterns for embroiderers and jewellers. But Martyr had been in Egypt, and he felt little hesitation in placing the Indian drawings in the same class with those he had seen on the obelisks and temples of that country.

great depository of the national archives. He then caused them to be piled up in a "mountain-heap" —as it is called by the Spanish writers themselves —in the market-place of Tlatelolco, and reduced them all to ashes![15] His greater countryman, Archbishop Ximenes, had celebrated a similar *auto-da-fé* of Arabic manuscripts, in Granada, some twenty years before. Never did fanaticism achieve two more signal triumphs than by the annihilation of so many curious monuments of human ingenuity and learning![16]

The unlettered soldiers were not slow in imitating the example of their prelate. Every chart and volume which fell into their hands was wantonly destroyed; so that, when the scholars of a later and more enlightened age anxiously sought to recover some of these memorials of civilization, nearly all had perished, and the few surviving were jealously hidden by the natives.[17] Through the indefatigable labors of a private individual, however, a

[15] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Prólogo.—Idem, Sum. Relac., MS.—["The name of Zumárraga," says Señor Alaman, "has other and very different titles to immortality from that mentioned by Mr. Prescott,—titles founded on his virtues and apostolic labors, especially on the fervid zeal with which he defended the natives and the manifold benefits he secured to them. The loss that history suffered by the destruction of the Indian manuscripts by the missionaries has been in a great measure repaired by the writings of the missionaries themselves." Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega), tom. i. p. 60.] —Writers are not agreed whether the conflagration took place in the square of Tlatelolco or Tezcuco. Comp. Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 188, and Bustamante's Pref. to Ixtlilxochitl, Cruautés des Conquérans, trad. de Ternaux, p. xvii.

[16] It has been my lot to record both these displays of human infirmity, so humbling to the pride of intellect. See the History of Ferdinand and Isabella, Part 2, chap. 6.

[17] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 10, cap. 27.—Bustamante, Mañanas de Alameda (México, 1836), tom. ii., Prólogo.

considerable collection was eventually deposited in the archives of Mexico,* but was so little heeded there that some were plundered, others decayed piecemeal from the damps and mildews, and others, again, were used up as waste paper![18] We contemplate with indignation the cruelties inflicted by the early conquerors. But indignation is qualified with contempt when we see them thus ruthlessly trampling out the spark of knowledge, the common boon and property of all mankind. We may well doubt which has the stronger claim to civilization, the victor or the vanquished.

A few of the Mexican manuscripts have found their way, from time to time, to Europe, and are carefully preserved in the public libraries of its capitals. They are brought together in the magnificent work of Lord Kingsborough; but not one is there from Spain. The most important of them, for the light it throws on the Aztec institutions, is the Mendoza Codex; which, after its mysterious disappearance for more than a century, has at length reappeared in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. It has been several times engraved.[19] The

[18] Very many of the documents thus painfully amassed in the archives of the Audience of Mexico were sold, according to Bustamante, as wrapping-paper, to apothecaries, shopkeepers, and rocket-makers! Boturini's noble collection has not fared much better.

[19] The history of this famous collection is familiar to scholars. It was sent to the Emperor Charles the Fifth, not long after the Conquest, by the viceroy Mendoza, Marques de Mondejar. The vessel

* ["After the zeal of the priests had somewhat abated, or rather when the harmless nature of the paintings was better understood, the natives were permitted to use their hieroglyphics again. Among other things they wrote down in this way their sins when the priests were too busy to hear their verbal confessions." Bancroft, Native Races, vol. ii. p. 526.—M.]

most brilliant in coloring, probably, is the Borgian collection, in Rome.[20] The most curious, however, is the Dresden Codex, which has excited less atten-

fell into the hands of a French cruiser, and the manuscript was taken to Paris. It was afterwards bought by the chaplain of the English embassy, and, coming into the possession of the antiquary Purchas, was engraved, *in extenso,* by him, in the third volume of his "Pilgrimage." After its publication, in 1625, the Aztec original lost its importance, and fell into oblivion so completely that, when at length the public curiosity was excited in regard to its fate, no trace of it could be discovered. Many were the speculations of scholars, at home and abroad, respecting it, and Dr. Robertson settled the question as to its existence in England, by declaring that there was no Mexican relic in that country, except a golden goblet of Montezuma. (History of America (London, 1796), vol. iii. p. 370.) Nevertheless, the identical Codex, and several other Mexican paintings, have been since discovered in the Bodleian Library. The circumstance has brought some obloquy on the historian, who, while prying into the collections of Vienna and the Escorial, could be so blind to those under his own eyes. The oversight will not appear so extraordinary to a thorough-bred collector, whether of manuscripts, or medals, or any other rarity. The Mendoza Codex is, after all, but a copy, coarsely done with a pen on European paper. Another copy, from which Archbishop Lorenzana engraved his tribute-rolls in Mexico, existed in Boturini's collection. A third is in the Escorial, according to the Marquis of Spineto. (Lectures on the Elements of Hieroglyphics (London), Lect. 7.) This may possibly be the original painting. The entire Codex, copied from the Bodleian maps, with its Spanish and English interpretations, is included in the noble compilation of Lord Kingsborough. (Vols. i., v., vi.) It is distributed into three parts, embracing the civil history of the nation, the tributes paid by the cities, and the domestic economy and discipline of the Mexicans, and, from the fulness of the interpretation, is of much importance in regard to these several topics.

[20] It formerly belonged to the Giustiniani family, but was so little cared for that it was suffered to fall into the mischievous hands of the domestics' children, who made sundry attempts to burn it. Fortunately, it was painted on deerskin, and, though somewhat singed, was not destroyed. (Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 89, et seq.) It is impossible to cast the eye over this brilliant assemblage of forms and colors without feeling how hopeless must be the attempt to recover a key to the Aztec mythological symbols; which are here distributed with the symmetry, indeed, but in all the endless combinations, of the kaleidoscope. It is in the third volume of Lord Kingsborough's work.

tion than it deserves. Although usually classed among Mexican manuscripts, it bears little resemblance to them in its execution; the figures of objects are more delicately drawn, and the characters, unlike the Mexican, appear to be purely arbitrary, and are possibly phonetic.[21] Their regular arrangement is quite equal to the Egyptian. The whole infers a much higher civilization than the Aztec, and offers abundant food for curious speculation.[22]

Some few of these maps have interpretations annexed to them, which were obtained from the na-

[21] Humboldt, who has copied some pages of it in his "Atlas pittoresque," intimates no doubt of its Aztec origin. (Vues des Cordillères, pp. 266, 267.) M. Le Noir even reads in it an exposition of Mexican Mythology, with occasional analogies to that of Egypt and of Hindostan. (Antiquités Mexicaines, tom. ii., Introd.) The fantastic forms of hieroglyphic symbols may afford analogies for almost anything.

[22] The history of this Codex, engraved entire in the third volume of the "Antiquities of Mexico," goes no further back than 1739, when it was purchased at Vienna for the Dresden Library. It is made of the American *agave*. The figures painted on it bear little resemblance, either in feature or form, to the Mexican. They are surmounted by a sort of head-gear, which looks something like a modern peruke. On the chin of one we may notice a beard, a sign often used after the Conquest to denote a European. Many of the persons are sitting cross-legged. The profiles of the faces, and the whole contour of the limbs, are sketched with a spirit and freedom very unlike the hard, angular outlines of the Aztecs. The characters, also, are delicately traced, generally in an irregular but circular form, and are very minute. They are arranged, like the Egyptian, both horizontally and perpendicularly, mostly in the former manner, and, from the prevalent direction of the profiles, would seem to have been read from right to left. Whether phonetic or ideographic, they are of that compact and purely conventional sort which belongs to a well-digested system for the communication of thought. One cannot but regret that no trace should exist of the quarter whence this MS. was obtained; perhaps some part of Central America, from the region of the mysterious races who built the monuments of Mitla and Palenque; though, in truth, there seems scarcely more resemblance

tives after the Conquest.[23] The greater part are without any, and cannot now be unriddled. Had the Mexicans made free use of a phonetic alphabet, it might have been originally easy, by mastering the comparatively few signs employed in this kind of communication, to have got a permanent key to the whole.[24] A brief inscription has furnished a clue to the vast labyrinth of Egyptian hieroglyphics. But the Aztec characters, representing individuals, or, at most, species, require to be made out separately; a hopeless task, for which little aid is to be expected from the vague and general tenor of the few interpretations now existing.

in the symbols to the Palenque *bas-reliefs* than to the Aztec paintings.*

[23] There are three of these: the Mendoza Codex; the Telleriano-Remensis,—formerly the property of Archbishop Teller,—in the Royal Library of Paris; and the Vatican MS., No. 3738. The interpretation of the last bears evident marks of its recent origin; probably as late as the close of the sixteenth or the beginning of the seventeenth century, when the ancient hieroglyphics were read with the eye of faith rather than of reason. Whoever was the commentator (comp. Vues des Cordillères, pp. 203, 204; and Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. pp. 155, 222), he has given such an exposition as shows the Aztecs to have been as orthodox Christians as any subjects of the Pope.

[24] The total number of Egyptian hieroglyphics discovered by Champollion amounts to 864; and of these 130 only are phonetic, notwithstanding that this kind of character is used far more frequently than both the others. Précis, p. 263;—also Spineto, Lectures, Lect. 3.

* [Mr. Stephens, who, like Humboldt, considered the Dresden Codex a Mexican manuscript, compared the characters of it with those on the altar of Copan, and drew the conclusion that the inhabitants of that place and of Palenque must have spoken the same language as the Aztecs. Prescott's opinion has, however, been confirmed by later critics, who have shown that the hieroglyphics of the Dresden Codex are quite different from those at Copan and Palenque, while the Mexican writing bears not the least resemblance to either. See Orozco y Berra, Geografia de las Lenguas de México, p. 101.—K.]

There was, as already mentioned, until late in the last century, a professor in the University of Mexico, especially devoted to the study of the national picture-writing. But, as this was with a view to legal proceedings, his information, probably, was limited to deciphering titles. In less than a hundred years after the Conquest, the knowledge of the hieroglyphics had so far declined that a diligent Tezcucan writer complains he could find in the country only two persons, both very aged, at all competent to interpret them.[25]

It is not probable, therefore, that the art of reading these picture-writings will ever be recovered; a circumstance certainly to be regretted. Not that the records of a semi-civilized people would be likely to contain any new truth or discovery important to human comfort or progress; but they could scarcely fail to throw some additional light on the previous history of the nation, and that of the more polished people who before occupied the country.* This would be still more probable, if any literary relics of their Toltec pre-

[25] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Dedic.—Boturini, who travelled through every part of the country in the middle of the last century, could not meet with an individual who could afford him the least clue to the Aztec hieroglyphics. So completely had every vestige of their ancient language been swept away from the memory of the natives. (Idea, p. 116.) If we are to believe Bustamante, however, a complete key to the whole system is, at this moment, *somewhere* in Spain. It was carried home, at the time of the process against Father Mier, in 1795. The name of the Mexican Champollion who discovered it is Borunda. Gama, Descripcion, tom. ii. p. 33, nota.

* [After the ancient picture-writings had been destroyed in Yucatan, and their harmlessness had been recognized, attempts were made to record once more the history they contained. These restored

decessors were preserved; and, if report be true, an important compilation from this source was extant at the time of the invasion, and may have perhaps contributed to swell the holocaust of Zumárraga.[26] It is no great stretch of fancy to suppose that such records might reveal the successive links in the mighty chain of migration of the primitive races, and, by carrying us back to the seat of their possessions in the Old World, have solved the mystery which has so long perplexed the

[26] *Teoamoxtli,* "the divine book," as it was called. According to Ixtlilxochitl, it was composed by a Tezcucan doctor, named Huematzin, towards the close of the seventeenth century. (Relaciones, MS.) It gave an account of the migrations of his nation from Asia, of the various stations on their journey, of their social and religious institutions, their science, arts, etc., etc., a good deal too much for one book. *Ignotum pro mirifico.* It has never been seen by a European.* A copy is said to have been in possession of the Tezcucan chroniclers on the taking of their capital. (Bustamante, Crónica Mexicana (México, 1822), carta 3.) Lord Kingsborough, who can scent out a Hebrew root be it buried never so deep, has discovered that the *Teoamoxtli* was the Pentateuch. Thus, *teo* means "divine," *amotl,* "paper" or "book," and *moxtli* "*appears* to be Moses;"—"Divine Book of Moses"! Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 204, nota.

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chronicles are called the Chilan Balam. From them Professor Daniel G. Brinton selected the stories he published as the "Maya Chronicles." One of them, the "Chronicle of Chicxulub," was written in Roman characters by a native Maya chief, Nakuk Pech, about the year 1562. It is a short account of the Spanish conquest of Yucatan and refers to Izamal and Chichen-Itza as inhabited towns in the first half of the sixteenth century.—M.]

* [It must have been seen by many Europeans, if we accept either the statement of the Baron de Waldeck, in 1838 (Voyage pittoresque et archéologique dans la Province d'Yucatan), that it was then in his possession, or the theories of Brasseur de Bourbourg, who identifies it with the Dresden Codex and certain other hieroglyphical manuscripts, and who believes himself to have found the key to it, and consequently to the origin of the Mexican history and civilization, in one of the documents in Boturini's collection, to which he has given the name of the Codex Chimalpopoca. Quatre Lettres sur le Mexique (Paris, 1868).—K.]

learned, in regard to the settlement and civilization of the New.*

Besides the hieroglyphical maps, the traditions of the country were embodied in the songs and hymns, which, as already mentioned, were carefully taught in the public schools. These were various, embracing the mythic legends of a heroic age, the warlike achievements of their own, or the softer tales of love and pleasure.[27] Many of them were composed by scholars and persons of rank, and are cited as affording the most authentic record of events.[28] The Mexican dialect was rich and expressive, though inferior to the Tezcucan, the most polished of the idioms of Anahuac. None of the Aztec compositions have survived, but we can form some estimate of the general state of poetic culture

[27] Boturini, Idea, pp. 90–97.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 174–178.

[28] "Los cantos con que las observaban Autores muy graves en su modo de ciencia y facultad, pues fuéron los mismos Reyes, y de la gente mas ilustre y entendida, que siempre observáron y adquiriéron la verdad, y esta con tanta razon, quanta pudiéron tener los mas graves y fidedignos Autores." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Prologo.

* [Such a supposition would require a "stretch of fancy" greater than any which the mind of the mere historical inquirer is capable of taking. To admit the probability of the Asiatic origin of the American races, and of the indefinite antiquity of Mexican civilization, is something very different from believing that this civilization, already developed in the degree required for the existence and preservation of its own records during so long a period and so great a migration, can have been transplanted from the one continent to the other. It would be easier to accept the theory, now generally abandoned, that the original settlers owed their civilization to a body of colonists from Phœnicia. In view of so hazardous a conjecture, it is difficult to understand why Buschmann has taken exception to the "sharp criticism" to which Prescott has subjected the sources of Mexican history, and his "low estimate of their value and credibility."—K.]

from the odes which have come down to us from the royal house of Tezcuco.[29] Sahagun has furnished us with translations of their more elaborate prose, consisting of prayers and public discourses, which give a favorable idea of their eloquence, and show that they paid much attention to rhetorical effect. They are said to have had, also, something like theatrical exhibitions, of a pantomimic sort, in which the faces of the performers were covered with masks, and the figures of birds or animals were frequently represented; an imitation to which they may have been led by the familiar delineation of such objects in their hieroglyphics.[30] In all this we see the dawning of a literary culture, surpassed, however, by their attainments in the severer walks of mathematical science.

They devised a system of notation in their arithmetic sufficiently simple. The first twenty numbers were expressed by a corresponding number of dots. The first five had specific names; after which they were represented by combining the fifth with one of the four preceding; as five and one for six, five and two for seven, and so on. Ten and fifteen had each a separate name, which was also combined with the first four, to express a higher quantity. These four, therefore, were the radical characters of their oral arithmetic, in the same manner as they were of the written with the ancient Romans; a

[29] See chap. 6 of this Introduction.

[30] See some account of these mummeries in Acosta (lib. 5, cap. 30),—also Clavigero (Stor. del Messico, ubi supra). Stone models of masks are sometimes found among the Indian ruins, and engravings of them are both in Lord Kingsborough's work and in the Antiquités Mexicaines.

more simple arrangement, probably, than any existing among Europeans.[31] Twenty was expressed by a separate hieroglyphic,—a flag. Larger sums were reckoned by twenties, and, in writing, by repeating the number of flags. The square of twenty, four hundred, had a separate sign, that of a plume, and so had the cube of twenty, or eight thousand, which was denoted by a purse, or sack. This was the whole arithmetical apparatus of the Mexicans, by the combination of which they were enabled to indicate any quantity. For greater expedition, they used to denote fractions of the larger sums by drawing only a part of the object. Thus, half or three-fourths of a plume, or of a purse, represented that proportion of their respective sums, and so on.[32] With all this, the machinery will appear very awkward to us, who perform our operations with so much ease by means of the Arabic or, rather, Indian ciphers. It is not much more awkward, however, than the system pursued by the great mathematicians of antiquity, unacquainted with the brilliant invention, which has given a new aspect to mathematical science, of determining the value, in a great measure, by the relative position of the figures.

In the measurement of time, the Aztecs adjusted

[31] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, Apend. 2.—Gama, in comparing the language of Mexican notation with the decimal system of the Europeans and the ingenious binary system of Leibnitz, confounds oral with written arithmetic.

[32] Ibid., ubi supra.—This learned Mexican has given a very satisfactory treatise on the arithmetic of the Aztecs, in his second part.

their civil year by the solar. They divided it into eighteen months of twenty days each. Both months and days were expressed by peculiar hieroglyphics,—those of the former often intimating the season of the year, like the French months at the period of the Revolution. Five complementary days, as in Egypt,[33] were added, to make up the full number of three hundred and sixty-five. They belonged to no month, and were regarded as peculiarly unlucky. A month was divided into four weeks, of five days each, on the last of which was the public fair, or market-day.[34] This arrangement, differing from that of the nations of the Old Continent, whether of Europe or Asia,[35] has the advantage of giving an equal number of days to each month, and of comprehending entire weeks, without a fraction, both in the months and in the year.[36]

As the year is composed of nearly six hours

[33] Herodotus, Euterpe, sec. 4.*

[34] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Apend.—According to Clavigero, the fairs were held on the days bearing the sign of the year. Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 62.

[35] The people of Java, according to Sir Stamford Raffles, regulated their markets, also, by a week of five days. They had, besides, our week of seven (History of Java (London, 1830), vol. i. pp. 531, 532.) The latter division of time, of general use throughout the East, is the oldest monument existing of astronomical science. See La Place, Exposition du Système du Monde (Paris, 1808), lib. 5, chap. 1.

[36] Veytia, Historia antigua de Méjico (Méjico, 1806), tom. i. cap. 6, 7.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 33, 34, et alibi.—Boturini, Idea, pp. 4, 44, et seq.—Cod. Tel.-Rem., ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 104.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 5.

* [And in France. In France the five extra days were called sans-cullottides.—M.]

more than three hundred and sixty-five days, there still remained an excess, which, like other nations who have framed a calendar, they provided for by intercalation; not, indeed, every fourth year, as the Europeans,[37] but at longer intervals, like some of the Asiatics.[38] They waited till the expiration of fifty-two vague years, when they interposed thirteen days, or rather twelve and a half, this being the number which had fallen in arrear. Had they inserted thirteen, it would have been too much, since the annual excess over three hundred and sixty-five is about eleven minutes less than six hours. But, as their calendar at the time of the Conquest was found to correspond with the European (making allowance for the subsequent Gregorian reform), they would seem to have adopted the shorter period of twelve days and a half,[39]

[37] Sahagun intimates doubts of this. "They celebrated another feast every four years in honor of the elements of fire, and it is probable and has been conjectured that it was on these occasions that they made their intercalation, counting six days of *nemontemi*," as the unlucky complementary days were called. (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Apend.) But this author, however good an authority for the superstitions, is an indifferent one for the science of the Mexicans.

[38] The Persians had a cycle of one hundred and twenty years, of three hundred and sixty-five days each, at the end of which they intercalated thirty days. (Humboldt, Vues des Cordillèras, p. 177.) This was the same as thirteen after the cycle of fifty-two years of the Mexicans, but was less accurate than their probable intercalation of twelve days and a half. It is obviously indifferent, as far as accuracy is concerned, which multiple of four is selected to form the cycle; though, the shorter the interval of intercalation, the less, of course, will be the temporary departure from the true time.

[39] This is the conclusion to which Gama arrives, after a very careful investigation of the subject. He supposes that the "bundles," or cycles, of fifty-two years—by which, as we shall see, the Mexicans computed time—ended alternately at midnight and midday. (Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 52, et seq.) He finds some warrant for this in Acosta's account (lib. 6, cap. 2), though contradicted by Torque-

which brought them, within an almost inappreciable fraction, to the exact length of the tropical year, as established by the most accurate observations.[40] Indeed, the intercalation of twenty-five days in every hundred and four years shows a nicer adjustment of civil to solar time than is presented by any European calendar; since more than five centuries must elapse before the loss of an entire day.[41] Such was the astonishing precision displayed by the Aztecs, or, perhaps, by their more polished Toltec predecessors, in these computations, so difficult as to have baffled, till a comparatively recent period, the most enlightened nations of Christendom![42]

mada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 5, cap. 33), and, as it appears, by Sahagun,—whose work, however, Gama never saw (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 7, cap. 9),—both of whom place the close of the year at midnight. Gama's hypothesis derives confirmation from a circumstance I have not seen noticed. Besides the "bundle" of fifty-two years, the Mexicans had a larger cycle of one hundred and four years, called "an old age." As this was not used in their reckonings, which were carried on by their "bundles," it seems highly probable that it was designed to express the period which would bring round the commencement of the smaller cycles to the same hour, and in which the intercalary days, amounting to twenty-five, might be comprehended without a fraction.

[40] This length, as computed by Zach, at 365d. 5h. 48m. 48sec., is only 2m. 9sec. longer than the Mexican; which corresponds with the celebrated calculation of the astronomers of the Caliph Almamon, that fell short about two minutes of the true time. See La Place, Exposition, p. 350.

[41] "El corto exceso de 4hor. 38min. 40seg., que hay de mas de los 25 dias en el período de 104 años, no puede componer un dia entero, hasta que pasen mas de cinco de estos períodos máximos ó 538 años." (Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 23.) Gama estimates the solar year at 365d. 5h. 48m. 50sec.

[42] The ancient Etruscans arranged their calendar in cycles of 110 solar years, and reckoned the year at 365d. 5h. 40m.; at least this seems probable, says Niebuhr. (History of Rome, Eng. trans. (Cambridge, 1828), vol. i. pp. 113, 238.) The early Romans had not wit

The chronological system of the Mexicans, by which they determined the date of any particular event, was also very remarkable. The epoch from which they reckoned corresponded with the year 1091 of the Christian era. It was the period of the reform of their calendar, soon after their migration from Aztlan. They threw the years, as already noticed, into great cycles, of fifty-two each, which they called "sheafs," or "bundles," and represented by a quantity of reeds bound together by a string. As often as this hieroglyphic occurs in their maps, it shows the number of half-centuries. To enable them to specify any particular year, they divided the great cycle into four

enough to avail themselves of this accurate measurement, which came within nine minutes of the true time. The Julian reform, which assumed 365d. 5¼h. as the length of the year, erred as much, or rather more, on the other side. And when the Europeans, who adopted this calendar, landed in Mexico, their reckoning was nearly eleven days in advance of the exact time,—or, in other words, of the reckoning of the barbarous Aztecs; * a remarkable fact.—Gama's researches led to the conclusion that the year of the new cycle began with the Aztecs on the ninth of January; a date considerably earlier than that usually assigned by the Mexican writers. (Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 49–52.) By postponing the intercalation to the end of fifty-two years, the annual loss of six hours made every fourth year begin a day earlier. Thus, the cycle commencing on the ninth of January, the fifth year of it began on the eighth, the ninth year on the seventh, and so on; so that the last day of the series of fifty-two years fell on the twenty-sixth of December, when the intercalation of thirteen days rectified the chronology and carried the commencement of the new year to the ninth of January again. Torquemada, puzzled by the irregularity of the new-year's day, asserts that the Mexicans were unacquainted with the annual excess of six hours, and therefore never intercalated! (Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 36.) The interpreter of the Vatican Codex has fallen into a series of blunders on the same subject, still more ludicrous. (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. Pl. 16.) So soon had Aztec science fallen into oblivion after the Conquest!

* [See also Wilson, Prehistoric Man, i. p. 246.—M.]

smaller cycles, or indictions, of thirteen years each. They then adopted two periodical series of signs, one consisting of their numerical dots, up to thirteen, the other, of four hieroglyphics of the years.[43] These latter they repeated in regular succession, setting against each one a number of the corresponding series of dots, continued also in regular succession up to thirteen. The same system was pursued through the four indictions, which thus, it will be observed, began always with a different hieroglyphic of the year from the preceding; and in this way each of the hieroglyphics was made to combine successively with each of the numerical signs, but never twice with the same; since four, and thirteen, the factors of fifty-two,—the number of years in the cycle,—must admit of just as many combinations as are equal to their product. Thus every year had its appropriate symbol, by which it was at once recognized. And this symbol, preceded by the proper number of "bundles" indicating the half-centuries, showed the precise time which had elapsed since the national epoch of 1091.[44] The ingenious contrivance of a periodical series, in place of the cumbrous system of hiero-

[43] These hieroglyphics were a "rabbit," a "reed," a "flint," a "house." They were taken as symbolical of the four elements, air, water, fire, earth, according to Veytia. (Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 5.) It is not easy to see the connection between the terms "rabbit" and "air," which lead the respective series.*

[44] The following table of two of the four indictions of thirteen years each will make the text more clear. The first column shows the actual year of the great cycle, or "bundle." The second, the nu-

* [The fleet and noiseless motions of the animal seem to offer an obvious explanation of the symbol.—K.]

glyphical notation, is not peculiar to the Aztecs, and is to be found among various nations on the

merical dots used in their arithmetic. The third is composed of their hieroglyphics for rabbit, reed, flint, house, in their regular order.

First Indiction.			Second Indiction.		
Year of the Cycle.			Year of the Cycle.		
1.	.		14.	.	
2.	. .		15.	. .	
3.	. . .		16.	. . .	
4.	. . . .		17.	. . . .	
5.	. . . . .		18.	. . . . .	
6.	:		19.	:	
7.	: : . . .		20.	: : . . .	
8.	: : . . .		21.	: : . . .	
9.	: : . . .		22.	: : . . .	
10.	: : . . .		23.	: : . . .	
11.	: : . . .		24.	: : . . .	
12.	: : . . .		25.	: : . . .	
13.	: : . . .		26.	: : . . .	

By pursuing the combinations through the two remaining indictions, it will be found that the same number of dots will never coincide with the same hieroglyphic. These tables are generally thrown into the form of wheels, as are those also of their months and days,

Asiatic continent,—the same in principle, though varying materially in arrangement.[45]

The solar calendar above described might have answered all the purposes of the people; but the priests chose to construct another for themselves. This was called a "lunar reckoning," though nowise accommodated to the revolutions of the moon.[46] It was formed, also, of two periodical series, one of them consisting of thirteen numerical signs, or dots, the other, of the twenty hieroglyph-

having a very pretty effect. Several have been published, at different times, from the collections of Siguenza and Boturini. The wheel of the great cycle of fifty-two years is encompassed by a serpent, which was also the symbol of "an age," both with the Persians and Egyptians. Father Toribio seems to misapprehend the nature of these chronological wheels: "Tenian rodelas y escudos, y en ellas pintadas las figuras y armas de sus Demonios con su blason." Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 4.

[45] Among the Chinese, Japanese, Moghols, Mantchous, and other families of the Tartar race. Their series are composed of symbols of their five elements, and the twelve zodiacal signs, making a cycle of sixty years' duration. Their several systems are exhibited, in connection with the Mexican, in the luminous pages of Humboldt (Vues des Cordillères, p. 149), who draws important consequences from the comparison, to which we shall have occasion to return hereafter.

[46] In this calendar, the months of the tropical year were distributed into cycles of thirteen days, which, being repeated twenty times,—the number of days in a solar month,—completed the lunar, or astrological, year of 260 days; when the reckoning began again. "By the contrivance of these *trecenas* (terms of thirteen days) and the cycle of fifty-two years," says Gama, "they formed a luni-solar period, most exact for astronomical purposes." (Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 27.) He adds that these *trecenas* were suggested by the periods in which the moon is visible before and after conjunction. (Loc. cit.) It seems hardly possible that a people capable of constructing a calendar so accurately on the true principles of solar time should so grossly err as to suppose that in this reckoning they really "represented the daily revolutions of the moon." "The whole Eastern world," says the learned Niebuhr, "has followed the moon in its calendar; the free scientific division of a vast portion of time is peculiar to the West. Connected with the West is that primeval extinct world which we call the New." History of Rome, vol. i. p. 239.

ics of the days. But, as the product of these combinations would be only 260, and as some confusion might arise from the repetition of the same terms for the remaining 105 days of the year, they invented a third series, consisting of nine additional hieroglyphics, which, alternating with the two preceding series, rendered it impossible that the three should coincide twice in the same year, or indeed in less than 2340 days; since $20 \times 13 \times 9 = 2340$.[47] Thirteen was a mystic number, of frequent use in their tables.[48] Why they resorted to that of nine, on this occasion, is not so clear.[49]

[47] They were named "companions," and "lords of the night," and were supposed to preside over the night, as the other signs did over the day. Boturini, Idea, p. 57.

[48] Thus, their astrological year was divided into months of thirteen days; there were thirteen years in their indictions, which contained each three hundred and sixty-five periods of thirteen days, etc. It is a curious fact that the number of lunar months of thirteen days contained in a cycle of fifty-two years, with the intercalation, should correspond precisely with the number of years in the great Sothic period of the Egyptians, namely, 1491; a period in which the seasons and festivals came round to the same place in the year again. The coincidence may be accidental. But a people employing periodical series and astrological calculations have generally some meaning in the numbers they select and the combinations to which they lead.

[49] According to Gama (Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 75, 76), because 369 can be divided by nine without a fraction; the nine "companions" not being attached to the five complementary days. But 4, a mystic number much used in their arithmetical combinations, would have answered the same purpose equally well. In regard to this, McCulloh observes, with much shrewdness, "It seems impossible that the Mexicans, so careful in constructing their cycle, should abruptly terminate it with 360 revolutions, whose natural period of termination is 2340." And he supposes the nine "companions" were used in connection with the cycles of 260 days, in order to throw them into the larger ones, of 2340; eight of which, with a ninth of 260 days, he ascertains to be equal to the great solar period of 52 years. (Researches, pp. 207, 208.) This is very plausible. But in fact the combinations of the two first series, forming the cycle of 260 days, were

This second calendar rouses a holy indignation in the early Spanish missionaries, and Father Sahagun loudly condemns it, as "most unhallowed, since it is founded neither on natural reason, nor on the influence of the planets, nor on the true course of the year; but is plainly the work of necromancy, and the fruit of a compact with the Devil!" [50] One may doubt whether the superstition of those who invented the scheme was greater than that of those who thus impugned it. At all events, we may, without having recourse to supernatural agency, find in the human heart a sufficient explanation of its origin; in that love of power, that has led the priesthood of many a faith to affect a mystery the key to which was in their own keeping.

By means of this calendar, the Aztec priests kept their own records, regulated the festivals and seasons of sacrifice, and made all their astrological calculations.[51] The false science of astrology is

always interrupted at the end of the year, since each new year began with the same hieroglyphic of the days. The third series of the "companions" was intermitted, as above stated, on the five unlucky days which closed the year, in order, if we may believe Boturini, that the first day of the solar year might have annexed to it the first of the nine "companions," which signified "lord of the year" (Idea, p. 57); a result which might have been equally well secured, without any intermission at all, by taking 5, another favorite number, instead of 9, as the divisor. As it was, however, the cycle, as far as the third series was concerned, did terminate with 360 revolutions. The subject is a perplexing one, and I can hardly hope to have presented it in such a manner as to make it perfectly clear to the reader.

[50] Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Introd.

[51] "Dans les pays les plus différents," says Benjamin Constant, concluding some sensible reflections on the sources of the sacerdotal power, "chez les peuples de mœurs les plus opposées, le sacerdoce a dû au culte des éléments et des astres un pouvoir dont aujourd'hui

natural to a state of society partially civilized, where the mind, impatient of the slow and cautious examination by which alone it can arrive at truth, launches at once into the regions of speculation, and rashly attempts to lift the veil—the impenetrable veil—which is drawn around the mysteries of nature. It is the characteristic of true science to discern the impassable, but not very obvious, limits which divide the province of reason from that of speculation. Such knowledge comes tardily. How many ages have rolled away, in which powers that, rightly directed, might have revealed the great laws of nature, have been wasted in brilliant but barren reveries on alchemy and astrology!

The latter is more particularly the study of a primitive age; when the mind, incapable of arriving at the stupendous fact that the myriads of minute lights glowing in the firmanent are the centres of systems as glorious as our own, is naturally led to speculate on their probable uses, and to connect them in some way or other with man, for whose convenience every other object in the universe seems to have been created. As the eye of the simple child of nature watches, through the long nights, the stately march of the heavenly bodies, and sees the bright hosts coming up, one after another, and changing with the changing seasons of the year, he naturally associates them with those seasons, as the periods over which they hold a mysterious influence. In the same manner, he connects their appearance with any interesting

nous concevons à peine l'idée." De la Religion (Paris, 1825), lib. 3, ch. 5.

event of the time, and explores, in their flaming characters, the destinies of the new-born infant.[52] Such is the origin of astrology, the false lights of which have continued from the earliest ages to dazzle and bewilder mankind, till they have faded away in the superior illumination of a comparatively recent period.

The astrological scheme of the Aztecs was founded less on the planetary influences than on those of the arbitrary signs they had adopted for the months and days. The character of the leading sign in each lunar cycle of thirteen days gave a complexion to the whole; though this was qualified in some degree by the signs of the succeeding days, as well as by those of the hours. It was in adjusting these conflicting forces that the great art of the diviner was shown. In no country, not even in ancient Egypt, were the dreams of the astrologer more implicitly deferred to. On the birth of a child, he was instantly summoned. The time of the event was accurately ascertained; and the family hung in trembling suspense, as the minister of Heaven cast the horoscope of the infant and unrolled the dark volume of destiny. The influence of the priest was confessed by the Mexican in the very first breath which he inhaled.[53]

[52] "It is a gentle and affectionate thought,
That, in immeasurable heights above us,
At our first birth the wreath of love was woven
With sparkling stars for flowers."
COLERIDGE: Translation of Wallenstein, act 2, sc. 4.

Schiller is more true to poetry than history, when he tells us, in the beautiful passage of which this is part, that the worship of the stars took the place of classic mythology. It existed long before it.

[53] Gama has given us a complete almanac of the astrological year, with the appropriate signs and divisions, showing with what scientific

We know little further of the astronomical attainments of the Aztecs. That they were acquainted with the cause of eclipses is evident from the representation, on their maps, of the disk of the moon projected on that of the sun.[54] Whether they had arranged a system of constellations is uncertain; though that they recognized some of the most obvious, as the Pleiades, for example, is evident from the fact that they regulated their festivals by them. We know of no astronomical instruments used by them, except the dial.[55] An immense circular block of carved stone, disinterred in 1790, in the great square of Mexico, has supplied an acute and learned scholar with the means of establishing some interesting facts in re-

skill it was adapted to its various uses. (Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 25–31, 62–76.) Sahagun has devoted a whole book to explaining the mystic import and value of these signs, with a minuteness that may enable one to cast up a scheme of nativity for himself. (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4.) It is evident he fully believed the magic wonders which he told. "It was a deceitful art," he says, "pernicious and idolatrous, and was never contrived by human reason." The good father was certainly no philosopher.

[54] See, among others, the Cod. Tel.-Rem., Part 4, Pl. 22, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i.

[55] "It can hardly be doubted," says Lord Kingsborough, "that the Mexicans were acquainted with many scientific instruments of strange invention, as compared with our own; whether the *telescope* may not have been of the number is uncertain; but the thirteenth plate of M. Dupaix's *Monuments*, Part Second, which represents a man holding something of a similar nature to his eye, affords reason to suppose that they knew how to improve the powers of vision." (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 15, note.) The instrument alluded to is rudely carved on a conical rock. It is raised no higher than the neck of the person who holds it, and looks—to my thinking—as much like a musket as a telescope; though I shall not infer the use of fire-arms among the Aztecs from this circumstance. (See vol. iv. Pl. 15.) Captain Dupaix, however, in his commentary on the drawing, sees quite as much in it as his lordship. Ibid., vol. v. p. 241.

gard to Mexican science.[56] This colossal fragment, on which the calendar * is engraved, shows that they had the means of settling the hours of the day with precision, the periods of the solstices and of the equinoxes, and that of the transit of the sun across the zenith of Mexico.[57]

We cannot contemplate the astronomical science of the Mexicans, so disproportioned to their progress in other walks of civilization, without astonishment. An acquaintance with some of the more obvious principles of astronomy is within the reach of the rudest people. With a little care, they may learn to connect the regular changes of the seasons

[56] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, sec. 4; Parte 2, Apend.—Besides this colossal fragment, Gama met with some others, designed, probably, for similar scientific uses, at Chapoltepec. Before he had leisure to examine them, however, they were broken up for materials to build a furnace,—a fate not unlike that which has too often befallen the monuments of ancient art in the Old World.

[57] In his second treatise on the cylindrical stone, Gama dwells more at large on its scientific construction, as a vertical sun-dial, in order to dispel the doubts of some sturdy skeptics on this point. (Descripcion, Parte 2, Apend. 1.) The civil day was distributed by the Mexicans into sixteen parts, and began, like that of most of the Asiatic nations, with sunrise. M. de Humboldt, who probably never saw Gama's second treatise, allows only eight intervals. Vues des Cordillères, p. 128.

* [For additional light upon the Mexican astronomical and calendar system and the "calendar stone," easily accessible authors are: Bandelier, Archæological Tour, Peabody Museum Reports, ii. 572; Valentini, American Antiquarian Society Proceedings, April, 1878; Squier, Some New Discoveries respecting Dates on the Great Calendar Stone, etc.; American Journal of Science and Arts, Second Series, March, 1849; Bancroft, Native Races, ii. chap. 16 and v. p. 192; Short, North Americans of Antiquity, chap. ix.; Wilson, Prehistoric Man, i; Brasseur, Chronologie historiques des Méxicaines, in Actes de la Soc. d'Ethnographie, vol vi.; Payne, New World Called America, ii. 310 seq. Mrs. Nuttall claims that this calendar stone stood in the great market-place in Mexico, and that its purpose was to regulate the market-days.—M.]

with those of the place of the sun at his rising and setting. They may follow the march of the great luminary through the heavens, by watching the stars that first brighten on his evening track or fade in his morning beams. They may measure a revolution of the moon, by marking her phases, and may even form a general idea of the number of such revolutions in a solar year. But that they should be capable of accurately adjusting their festivals by the movements of the heavenly bodies, and should fix the true length of the tropical year, with a precision unknown to the great philosophers of antiquity, could be the result only of a long series of nice and patient observations, evincing no slight progress in civilization.[58] But whence could the rude inhabitants of these mountain-regions have derived this curious erudition? Not from the barbarous hordes who roamed over the higher latitudes of the North; nor from the more polished races on the Southern continent, with whom, it is apparent, they had no intercourse. If we are driven, in our embarrassment, like the greatest astronomer of our age, to seek the solution among the civilized communities of Asia, we shall still be perplexed by finding, amidst general resemblance of outline, sufficient discrepancy in the details to

[58] "Un calendrier," exclaims the enthusiastic Carli, "qui est réglé sur la révolution annuelle du soleil, non-seulement par l'addition de cinq jours tous les ans, mais encore par la correction du bissextile, doit sans doute être regardé comme une opération déduite d'une étude réfléchie, et d'une grande combinaison. Il faut donc supposer chez ces peuples une suite d'observations astronomiques, une idée distincte de la sphère, de la déclinaison de l'écliptique, et l'usage d'un calcul concernant les jours et les heures des apparitions solaires." Lettres Américaines, tom. i. let. 23.

vindicate, in the judgments of many, the Aztec claim to originality.[59]

I shall conclude the account of Mexican science with that of a remarkable festival, celebrated by the natives at the termination of the great cycle of fifty-two years. We have seen, in the preceding chapter, their tradition of the destruction of the world at four successive epochs. They looked forward confidently to another such catastrophe, to take place, like the preceding, at the close of a cycle, when the sun was to be effaced from the heavens, the human race from the earth, and when the darkness of chaos was to settle on the habitable globe. The cycle would end in the latter part of December, and as the dreary season of the winter solstice approached, and the diminished light of day gave melancholy presage of its speedy extinction, their apprehensions increased; and on the arrival of the five "unlucky" days which closed the year they abandoned themselves to despair.[60] They broke in pieces the little images of their household gods, in whom they no longer trusted. The holy fires were suffered to go out in the temples, and none were lighted in their own dwellings. Their furniture and domestic utensils were destroyed; their garments torn in pieces; and every thing was thrown into disorder, for the coming of

[59] La Place, who suggests the analogy, frankly admits the difficulty. Système du Monde, lib. 5, ch. 3.

[60] M. Jomard errs in placing the *new fire,* with which ceremony the old cycle properly concluded, at the winter solstice. It was not till the 26th of December, if Gama is right. The cause of M. Jomard's error is his fixing it before, instead of after, the complementary days. See his sensible letter on the Aztec calendar, in the Vues des Cordillères, p. 309.

the evil genii who were to descend on the desolate earth.

On the evening of the last day, a procession of priests, assuming the dress and ornaments of their gods, moved from the capital towards a lofty mountain, about two leagues distant. They carried with them a noble victim, the flower of their captives, and an apparatus for kindling the *new fire,* the success of which was an augury of the renewal of the cycle. On reaching the summit of the mountain, the procession paused till midnight; when, as the constellation of the Pleiades approached the zenith,[61] the *new fire* was kindled by the friction of the sticks placed on the wounded breast of the victim.[62] The flame was soon communicated to a funeral pile, on which the body of the slaughtered captive was thrown. As the light streamed up towards heaven, shouts of joy and triumph burst forth from the countless multitudes who covered the hills, the terraces of the temples, and the house-tops, with eyes anxiously bent on the mount of sacrifice. Couriers, with torches lighted at the blazing beacon, rapidly bore them

[61] At the actual moment of their culmination, according to both Sahagun (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, Apend.) and Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 33, 36). But this could not be, as that took place at midnight, in November, so late as the last secular festival, which was early in Montezuma's reign, in 1507. (Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 50, nota.—Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, pp. 181, 182.) The longer we postpone the beginning of the new cycle, the greater must be the discrepancy.

[62] "On his bare breast the cedar boughs are laid:
On his bare breast, dry sedge and odorous gums,
Laid ready to receive the sacred spark,
And blaze, to herald the ascending Sun,
Upon his living altar."

SOUTHEY's Madoc, part 2, canto 26.

over every part of the country; and the cheering element was seen brightening on altar and hearthstone, for the circuit of many a league, long before the sun, rising on his accustomed track, gave assurance that a new cycle had commenced its march, and that the laws of nature were not to be reversed for the Aztecs.

The following thirteen days were given up to festivity. The houses were cleansed and whitened. The broken vessels were replaced by new ones. The people, dressed in their gayest apparel, and crowned with garlands and chaplets of flowers, thronged in joyous procession to offer up their oblations and thanksgivings in the temples. Dances and games were instituted, emblematical of the regeneration of the world. It was the carnival of the Aztecs; or rather the national jubilee, the great secular festival, like that of the Romans, or ancient Etruscans, which few alive had witnessed before, or could expect to see again.[63]

[63] I borrow the words of the summons by which the people were called to the *ludi seculares*, the secular games of ancient Rome, "*quos nec spectâsset quisquam, nec spectaturus esset.*" (Suetonius, Vita Tib. Claudii, lib. 5.) The old Mexican chroniclers warm into something like eloquence in their descriptions of the Aztec festival. (Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 10, cap. 33.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 5.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 7, cap. 9–12. See, also, Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 52–54,—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 84–86.) The English reader will find a more brilliant coloring of the same scene in the canto of Madoc above cited,—"On the Close of the Century."

M. de Humboldt remarked, many years ago, "It were to be wished that some government would publish at its own expense the remains of the ancient American civilization; for it is only by the comparison of several monuments that we can succeed in discovering the meaning of these allegories, which are partly astronomical and partly mystic." This enlightened wish has now been realized, not by any

government, but by a private individual, Lord Kingsborough. The great work published under his auspices, and so often cited in this Introduction, appeared in London in 1830. When completed it will reach to nine volumes, seven of which are now before the public. Some idea of its magnificence may be formed by those who have not seen it, from the fact that copies of it, with colored plates, sold originally at £175, and, with uncolored, at £120. The price has been since much reduced. It is designed to exhibit a complete view of the ancient Aztec MSS., with such few interpretations as exist; the beautiful drawings of Castañeda relating to Central America, with the commentary of Dupaix; the unpublished history of Father Sahagun; and, last, not least, the copious annotations of his lordship.

Too much cannot be said of the mechanical execution of the book, —its splendid typography, the apparent accuracy and the delicacy of the drawings, and the sumptuous quality of the materials. Yet the purchaser would have been saved some superfluous expense, and the reader much inconvenience, if the letter-press had been in volumes of an ordinary size. But it is not uncommon, in works on this magnificent plan, to find utility in some measure sacrificed to show.

The collection of Aztec MSS., if not perfectly complete, is very extensive, and reflects great credit on the diligence and research of the compiler. It strikes one as strange, however, that not a single document should have been drawn from Spain. Peter Martyr speaks of a number having been brought thither in his time. (De Insulis nuper Inventis, p. 368.) The Marquis Spineto examined one in the Escorial, being the same with the Mendoza Codex, and perhaps the original, since that at Oxford is but a copy. (Lectures, Lect. 7.) Mr. Waddilove, chaplain of the British embassy to Spain, gave a particular account of one to Dr. Robertson, which he saw in the same library and considered an Aztec calendar. Indeed, it is scarcely possible that the frequent voyagers to the New World should not have furnished the mother-country with abundant specimens of this most interesting feature of Aztec civilization. Nor should we fear that the present liberal government would seclude these treasures from the inspection of the scholar.

Much cannot be said in favor of the arrangement of these codices. In some of them, as the Mendoza Codex, for example, the plates are not even numbered; and one who would study them by the corresponding interpretation must often bewilder himself in the maze of hieroglyphics, without a clue to guide him. Neither is there any attempt to enlighten us as to the positive value and authenticity of the respective documents, or even their previous history, beyond a barren reference to the particular library from which they have been borrowed. Little light, indeed, can be expected on these matters; but we have not that little. The defect of arrangement is chargeable on other parts of the work. Thus, for instance, the sixth book of Sahagun is transferred from the body of the history to which it belongs, to a preceding volume; while the grand hypothesis of his

lordship, for which the work was concocted, is huddled into notes, hitched on random passages of the text, with a good deal less connection than the stories of Queen Scheherezade, in the "Arabian Nights," and not quite so entertaining.

The drift of Lord Kingsborough's speculations is, to establish the colonization of Mexico by the Israelites. To this the whole battery of his logic and learning is directed. For this, hieroglyphics are unriddled, manuscripts compared, monuments delineated. His theory, however, whatever be its merits, will scarcely become popular; since, instead of being exhibited in a clear and comprehensive form, readily embraced by the mind, it is spread over an infinite number of notes, thickly sprinkled with quotations from languages ancient and modern, till the weary reader, floundering about in the ocean of fragments, with no light to guide him, feels like Milton's Devil, working his way through chaos,—

"neither sea,
Nor good dry land; nigh foundered, on he fares."

It would be unjust, however, not to admit that the noble author, if his logic is not always convincing, shows much acuteness in detecting analogies; that he displays familiarity with his subject, and a fund of erudition, though it often runs to waste; that, whatever be the defects of arrangement, he has brought together a most rich collection of unpublished materials to illustrate the Aztec and, in a wider sense, American antiquities; and that by this munificent undertaking, which no government, probably, would have, and few individuals could have, executed, he has entitled himself to the lasting gratitude of every friend of science.

Another writer whose works must be diligently consulted by every student of Mexican antiquities is Antonio Gama. His life contains as few incidents as those of most scholars. He was born at Mexico, in 1735, of a respectable family, and was bred to the law. He early showed a preference for mathematical studies, conscious that in this career lay his strength. In 1771 he communicated his observations on the eclipse of that year to the French astronomer M. de Lalande, who published them in Paris, with high commendations of the author. Gama's increasing reputation attracted the attention of government; and he was employed by it in various scientific labors of importance. His great passion, however, was the study of Indian antiquities. He made himself acquainted with the history of the native races, their traditions, their languages, and, as far as possible, their hieroglyphics. He had an opportunity of showing the fruits of this preparatory training, and his skill as an antiquary, on the discovery of the great calendar stone, in 1790. He produced a masterly treatise on this, and another Aztec monument, explaining the objects to which they were devoted, and pouring a flood of light on the astronomical science of the aborigines, their mythology, and their astrological system. He afterwards continued his investiga-

tions in the same path, and wrote treatises on the dial, hieroglyphics, and arithmetic of the Indians. These, however, were not given to the world till a few years since, when they were published, together with a reprint of the former work, under the auspices of the industrious Bustamante. Gama died in 1802, leaving behind him a reputation for great worth in private life,—one in which the bigotry that seems to enter too frequently into the character of the Spanish-Mexican was tempered by the liberal feelings of a man of science. His reputation as a writer stands high for patient acquisition, accuracy, and acuteness. His conclusions are neither warped by the love of theory so common in the philosopher, nor by the easy credulity so natural to the antiquary. He feels his way with the caution of a mathematician, whose steps are demonstrations. M. de Humboldt was largely indebted to his first work, as he has emphatically acknowledged. But, notwithstanding the eulogiums of this popular writer, and his own merits, Gama's treatises are rarely met with out of New Spain, and his name can hardly be said to have a transatlantic reputation.

CHAPTER V

AZTEC AGRICULTURE—MECHANICAL ARTS—MERCHANTS—DOMESTIC MANNERS

IT is hardly possible that a nation so far advanced as the Aztecs in mathematical science should not have made considerable progress in the mechanical arts, which are so nearly connected with it. Indeed, intellectual progress of any kind implies a degree of refinement that requires a certain cultivation of both useful and elegant art. The savage wandering through the wide forest, without shelter for his head or raiment for his back, knows no other wants than those of animal appetites, and, when they are satisfied, seems to himself to have answered the only ends of existence. But man, in society, feels numerous desires, and artificial tastes spring up, accommodated to the various relations in which he is placed, and perpetually stimulating his invention to devise new expedients to gratify them.

There is a wide difference in the mechanical skill of different nations; but the difference is still greater in the inventive power which directs this skill and makes it available. Some nations seem to have no power beyond that of imitation, or, if they possess invention, have it in so low a degree that

they are constantly repeating the same idea, without a shadow of alteration or improvement; as the bird builds precisely the same kind of nest which those of its own species built at the beginning of the world. Such, for example, are the Chinese, who have probably been familiar for ages with the germs of some discoveries,* of little practical benefit to themselves, but which, under the influence of European genius, have reached a degree of excellence that has wrought an important change in the constitution of society.

Far from looking back and forming itself slavishly on the past, it is characteristic of the European intellect to be ever on the advance. Old discoveries become the basis of new ones. It passes onward from truth to truth, connecting the whole by a succession of links, as it were, into the great chain of science which is to encircle and bind together the universe. The light of learning is shed over the labors of art. New avenues are opened for the communication both of person and of thought. New facilities are devised for subsistence. Personal comforts, of every kind, are inconceivably multiplied, and brought within the reach of the poorest. Secure of these, the thoughts travel into a nobler region than that of the senses; and the appliances of art are made to minister to the demands of an elegant taste and a higher moral culture.

The same enlightened spirit, applied to agriculture, raises it from a mere mechanical drudgery, or the barren formula of traditional precepts, to

* *E.g.*, gunpowder and the compass.—M.

the dignity of a science. As the composition of the earth is analyzed, man learns the capacity of the soil that he cultivates; and, as his empire is gradually extended over the elements of nature, he gains the power to stimulate her to her most bountiful and various production. It is with satisfaction that we can turn to the land of our fathers, as the one in which the experiment has been conducted on the broadest scale and attended with results that the world has never before witnessed. With equal truth, we may point to the Anglo-Saxon race in both hemispheres, as that whose enterprising genius has contributed most essentially to the great interests of humanity, by the application of science to the useful arts.

Husbandry, to a very limited extent, indeed, was practised by most of the rude tribes of North America. Wherever a natural opening in the forest, or a rich strip of *interval,* met their eyes, or a green slope was found along the rivers, they planted it with beans and Indian corn.[1] The cultivation was slovenly in the extreme, and could not secure the improvident natives from the frequent recurrence of desolating famines. Still, that they tilled the soil at all was a peculiarity which honorably distinguished them from other tribes of hunters, and raised them one degree higher in the scale of civilization.

[1] This latter grain, according to Humboldt, was found by the Europeans in the New World, from the South of Chili to Pennsylvania (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 408); he might have added, to the St. Lawrence. Our Puritan fathers found it in abundance on the New England coast, wherever they landed. See Morton, New England's Memorial (Boston, 1826), p. 68.—Gookin, Massachusetts Historical Collections, chap. 3.

Agriculture in Mexico was in the same advanced state as the other arts of social life. In few countries, indeed, has it been more respected. It was closely interwoven with the civil and religious institutions of the nation. There were peculiar deities to preside over it; the names of the months and of the religious festivals had more or less reference to it. The public taxes, as we have seen, were often paid in agricultural produce. All except the soldiers and great nobles, even the inhabitants of the cities, cultivated the soil. The work was chiefly done by the men; the women scattering the seed, husking the corn, and taking part only in the lighter labors of the field.[2] In this they presented an honorable contrast to the other tribes of the continent, who imposed the burden of agriculture, severe as it is in the North, on their women.[3] Indeed, the sex was as tenderly regarded by the Aztecs in this matter, as it is, in most parts of Europe, at the present day.

There was no want of judgment in the management of their ground. When somewhat exhausted,

[2] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 31.—"Admirable example for our times," exclaims the good father, "when women are not only unfit for the labors of the field, but have too much levity to attend to their own household!"

[3] A striking contrast also to the Egyptians, with whom some antiquaries are disposed to identify the ancient Mexicans. Sophocles notices the effeminacy of the men in Egypt, who stayed at home tending the loom, while their wives were employed in severe labors out of doors:

> "Ὦ πάντ' ἐκείνῳ τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ νόμοις
> Φύσιν κατεικασθέντε καὶ βίου τροφάς,
> Ἐκεῖ γὰρ οἱ μὲν ἄρσενες κατὰ στέγας
> Θακοῦσιν ἱστουργοῦντες· αἱ δὲ σύννομοι
> Τἄξω βίου τροφεῖα πορσύνουσ' ἀεί."
>
> SOPHOCL., Œdip. Col. v. 337–341.

it was permitted to recover by lying fallow. Its extreme dryness was relieved by canals, with which the land was partially irrigated; and the same end was promoted by severe penalties against the destruction of the woods, with which the country, as already noticed, was well covered before the Conquest. Lastly, they provided for their harvests ample granaries, which were admitted by the Conquerors to be of admirable construction. In this provision we see the forecast of civilized man.[4]

Among the most important articles of husbandry, we may notice the banana, whose facility of cultivation and exuberant returns are so fatal to habits of systematic and hardy industry.[5] Another celebrated plant was the cacao, the fruit of which furnished the chocolate,—from the Mexican *chocolatl*,—now so common a beverage throughout Europe.[6] The vanilla, confined to a small district of the sea-coast, was used for the same purposes, of flavoring their food and drink, as with us.[7] The great staple of the country, as, indeed, of the

[4] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 32.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 153–155.—"Jamas padeciéron hambre," says the former writer, "sino en pocas ocasiones." If these famines were rare, they were very distressing, however, and lasted very long. Comp. Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 41, 71, et alibi.

[5] Oviedo considers the *musa* an imported plant; and Hernandez, in his copious catalogue, makes no mention of it at all. But Humboldt, who has given much attention to it, concludes that, if some species were brought into the country, others were indigenous. (Essai politique, tom. ii. pp. 382–388.) If we may credit Clavigero, the banana was the forbidden fruit that tempted our poor mother Eve! Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 49, nota.

[6] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.—Hernandez, De Historiâ Plantarum Novæ Hispaniæ (Matriti, 1790), lib. 6, cap. 87.

[7] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 13, et alibi.

American continent, was maize, or Indian corn,* which grew freely along the valleys, and up the steep sides of the Cordilleras to the high level of the table-land. The Aztecs were as curious in its preparation, and as well instructed in its manifold uses, as the most expert New England housewife. Its gigantic stalks, in these equinoctial regions, afford a saccharine matter, not found to the same extent in northern latitudes, and supplied the natives with sugar little inferior to that of the cane itself, which was not introduced among them till after the Conquest.[8] But the miracle of nature was the great Mexican aloe, or *maguey,* whose clustering pyramids of flowers, towering above their dark coronals of leaves, were seen sprinkled over many a broad acre of the table-land. As we have already noticed, its bruised leaves afforded a paste from which paper was manufactured;[9] its

[8] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—He extols the honey of the maize, as equal to that of bees. (Also Oviedo, Hist. natural de las Indias, cap. 4, ap. Barcia, tom. i.) Hernandez, who celebrates the manifold ways in which the maize was prepared, derives it from the Haytian word *mahiz.* Hist. Plantarum, lib. 6, cap. 44, 45.

[9] And is still, in one spot at least, San Ángel,—three leagues from the capital. Another mill was to have been established, a few years since, in Puebla. Whether this has actually been done, I am ignorant. See the Report of the Committee on Agriculture to the Senate of the United States, March 12, 1838.

* The farmer's preparation for his crop of Indian corn was of the simplest. He simply cut away the dense growth from his corn-field and burned it. The ashes thus secured were the only fertilizer used. Just before the first rain in May or June he made holes with a sharpened stick, and at regular intervals, in the prepared ground, and into them dropped four or five grains of corn. In the later days of the Aztec domination considerable care was taken of the growing crops. They were kept free from weeds and in some cases irrigated. Boys stationed on elevated platforms or trees frightened away the birds.—M.

juice was fermented into an intoxicating beverage, *pulque,* of which the natives, to this day, are excessively fond;[10] its leaves further supplied an impenetrable thatch for the more humble dwellings; thread, of which coarse stuffs were made, and strong cords, were drawn from its tough and twisted fibres; pins and needles were made of the thorns at the extremity of its leaves; and the root, when properly cooked, was converted into a palatable and nutritious food. The *agave,** in short, was meat, drink, clothing, and writing-materials, for the Aztec! Surely, never did Nature enclose in so compact a form so many of the elements of human comfort and civilization![11]

[10] Before the Revolution, the duties on the *pulque* formed so important a branch of revenue that the cities of Mexico, Puebla, and Toluca alone paid $817,739 to government. (Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 47.) It requires time to reconcile Europeans to the peculiar flavor of this liquor, on the merits of which they are consequently much divided. There is but one opinion among the natives. The English reader will find a good account of its manufacture in Ward's Mexico, vol. ii. pp. 55–60.

[11] Hernandez enumerates the several species of the maguey, which are turned to these manifold uses, in his learned work, De Hist. Plantarum. (Lib. 7, cap. 71, et seq.) M. de Humboldt considers them all varieties of the *agave Americana,* familiar in the southern parts both of the United States and Europe. (Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 487, et seq.) This opinion has brought on him a rather sour rebuke from our countryman the late Dr. Perrine, who pronounces them a distinct species from the American *agave,* and regards one of the kinds, the *pita,* from which the fine thread is obtained, as a

* [Ober (Travels in Mexico) gives a very full account of the uses to which the maguey is put. On the maguey plantations the plants have an average value of five dollars. "A long train departs every day from the stations on the plains of Apam, loaded exclusively with *pulque,* from the carriage of which the railroad derives a revenue of above $1000 a day," p. 345. The *pulque* "tastes like stale buttermilk and has an odor at times like that of putrid meat." It is wholesome and refreshing. Mexicans ascribe to it the same beneficent properties which Scotsmen assign to their whiskey.—M.]

It would be obviously out of place to enumerate in these pages all the varieties of plants, many of them of medicinal virtue, which have been introduced from Mexico into Europe. Still less can I attempt a catalogue of its flowers, which, with their variegated and gaudy colors, form the greatest attraction of our greenhouses. The opposite climates embraced within the narrow latitudes of New Spain have given to it, probably, the richest and most diversified flora to be found in any country on the globe. These different products were systematically arranged by the Aztecs, who understood their properties, and collected them into nurseries, more extensive than any then existing in the Old World. It is not improbable that they suggested the idea of those "gardens of plants" which were introduced into Europe not many years after the Conquest.[12]

The Mexicans were as well acquainted with the mineral as with the vegetable treasures of their kingdom. Silver, lead, and tin they drew from the mines of Tasco; copper from the mountains of

totally distinct genus. (See the Report of the Committee on Agriculture.) Yet the Baron may find authority for all the properties ascribed by him to the maguey, in the most accredited writers who have resided more or less time in Mexico. See, among others, Hernandez, ubi supra.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 2; lib. 11, cap. 7.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 19. —Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS. The last, speaking of the maguey, which produces the fermented drink, says expressly, "With what remain of these leaves they manufacture excellent and very fine cloth, resembling holland, or the finest linen." It cannot be denied, however, that Dr. Perrine shows himself intimately acquainted with the structure and habits of the tropical plants, which, with such patriotic spirit, he proposed to introduce into Florida.

[12] The first regular establishment of this kind, according to Carli, was at Padua, in 1545. Lettres Américaines, tom. i. chap. 21.

Zacotollan. These were taken not only from the crude masses on the surface, but from veins wrought in the solid rock, into which they opened extensive galleries. In fact, the traces of their labors furnished the best indications for the early Spanish miners.[13] Gold, found on the surface, or gleaned from the beds of rivers, was cast into bars, or, in the form of dust, made part of the regular tribute of the southern provinces of the empire. The use of iron, with which the soil was impregnated, was unknown to them. Notwithstanding its abundance, it demands so many processes to prepare it for use that it has commonly been one of the last metals pressed into the service of man. The age of iron has followed that of brass, in fact as well as in fiction.[14]

[13] [Though I have conformed to the views of Humboldt in regard to the knowledge of mining possessed by the ancient Mexicans, Señor Ramirez thinks the conclusions to which I have been led are not warranted by the ancient writers. From the language of Bernal Diaz and of Sahagun, in particular, he infers that their only means of obtaining the precious metals was by gathering such detached masses as were found on the surface of the ground or in the beds of the rivers. The small amount of silver in their possession he regards as an additional proof of their ignorance of the proper method and their want of the requisite tools for extracting it from the earth. See Ramirez, Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 73.]

[14] P. Martyr, De Orbe Novo, Decades (Compluti, 1530), dec. 5, p. 191.—Acosta, lib. 4, cap. 3.—Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. iii. pp. 114–125.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.

"Men wrought in brass," says Hesiod, "when iron did not exist."

Χαλκῷ δ' ἐργάζοντο' μέλας δ' οὐκ ἔσκε σίδηρος.
Hesiod, Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμεραι.

The Abbé Raynal contends that the ignorance of iron must necessarily have kept the Mexicans in a low state of civilization, since without it "they could have produced no work in metal, worth looking at, no masonry nor architecture, engraving nor sculpture." (History of the Indies, Eng. trans., vol. iii. b. 6.) Iron, however, if

They found a substitute in an alloy of tin and copper, and, with tools made of this bronze, could cut not only metals, but, with the aid of a silicious dust, the hardest substances, as basalt, porphyry, amethysts, and emeralds.[15] They fashioned these last, which were found very large, into many curious and fantastic forms. They cast, also, vessels of gold and silver, carving them with their metallic chisels in a very delicate manner. Some of the silver vases were so large that a man could not encircle them with his arms. They imitated very nicely the figures of animals, and, what was extraordinary, could mix the metals in such a manner that the feathers of a bird, or the scales of a fish, should be alternately of gold and silver. The Spanish goldsmiths admitted their superiority over themselves in these ingenious works.[16]

They employed another tool, made of *itztli,* or obsidian, a dark transparent mineral, exceedingly hard, found in abundance in their hills. They

known, was little used by the ancient Egyptians, whose mighty monuments were hewn with bronze tools; while their weapons and domestic utensils were of the same material, as appears from the green color given to them in their paintings.

[15] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 25–29.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., ubi supra.

[16] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 15–17.—Boturini, Idea, p. 77.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., loc. cit.—Herrera, who says they could also enamel, commends the skill of the Mexican goldsmiths in making birds and animals with movable wings and limbs, in a most curious fashion. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 15.) Sir John Maundeville, as usual,

> " with his hair on end
> At his own wonders,"

notices the " gret marvayle " of similar pieces of mechanism at the court of the grand Chane of Cathay. See his Voiage and Travaile, chap. 20.

made it into knives, razors, and their serrated swords. It took a keen edge, though soon blunted. With this they wrought the various stones and alabasters employed in the construction of their public works and principal dwellings. I shall defer a more particular account of these to the body of the narrative, and will only add here that the entrances and angles of the buildings were profusely ornamented with images, sometimes of their fantastic deities, and frequently of animals.[17] The latter were executed with great accuracy. "The former," according to Torquemada, "were the hideous reflection of their own souls. And it was not till after they had been converted to Christianity that they could model the true figure of a man."[18] The old chronicler's facts are well founded, whatever we may think of his reasons. The allegorical phantasms of his religion, no doubt, gave a direction to the Aztec artist, in his delineation of the human figure; supplying him with an imaginary beauty in the personification of divinity itself. As these superstitions lost their hold on his mind, it opened to the influences of a purer taste; and, after the Conquest, the Mexicans furnished many examples of correct, and some of beautiful, portraiture.

Sculptured images were so numerous that the foundations of the cathedral in the *plaza mayor*, the great square of Mexico, are said to be entirely

[17] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 11.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 27, 28.

[18] "Parece, que permitia Dios, que la figura de sus cuerpos se asimilase á la que tenian sus almas por el pecado, en que siempre permanecian." Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.

composed of them.[19] This spot may, indeed, be regarded as the Aztec forum,—the great depository of the treasures of ancient sculpture, which now lie hid in its bosom. Such monuments are spread all over the capital, however, and a new cellar can hardly be dug, or foundation laid, without turning up some of the mouldering relics of barbaric art. But they are little heeded, and, if not wantonly broken in pieces at once, are usually worked into the rising wall or supports of the new edifice.[20] Two celebrated bas-reliefs of the last Montezuma and his father, cut in the solid rock, in the beautiful groves of Chapoltepec, were deliberately destroyed, as late as the eighteenth century, by order of the government![21] The monuments of the barbarian meet with as little respect from civilized man as those of the civilized man from the barbarian.[22]

The most remarkable piece of sculpture yet disinterred is the great calendar stone, noticed in the preceding chapter. It consists of dark porphyry, and in its original dimensions, as taken from the

[19] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 195.

[20] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, p. 1. Besides the *plaza mayor*, Gama points out the Square of Tlatelolco, as a great cemetery of ancient relics. It was the quarter to which the Mexicans retreated, on the siege of the capital.

[21] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 34.—Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, pp. 81–83.—These statues are repeatedly noticed by the old writers. The last was destroyed in 1754, when it was seen by Gama, who highly commends the execution of it. Ibid.

[22] This wantonness of destruction provokes the bitter animadversion of Martyr, whose enlightened mind respected the vestiges of civilization wherever found. "The conquerors," he says, "seldom repaired the buildings that were defaced. They would rather sack twenty stately cities than erect one good edifice." De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.

quarry, is computed to have weighed nearly fifty tons. It was transported from the mountains beyond Lake Chalco, a distance of many leagues, over a broken country intersected by watercourses and canals. In crossing a bridge which traversed one of these latter, in the capital, the supports gave way, and the huge mass was precipitated into the water, whence it was with difficulty recovered. The fact that so enormous a fragment of porphyry could be thus safely carried for leagues, in the face of such obstacles, and without the aid of cattle,—for the Aztecs, as already mentioned, had no animals of draught,—suggests to us no mean ideas of their mechanical skill, and of their machinery, and implies a degree of cultivation little inferior to that demanded for the geometrical and astronomical science displayed in the inscriptions on this very stone.[23] *

The ancient Mexicans made utensils of earthenware for the ordinary purposes of domestic life,

[23] Gama, Descripcion, Parte 1, pp. 110–114.—Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. ii. p. 40.—Ten thousand men were employed in the transportation of this enormous mass, according to Tezozomoc, whose narrative, with all the accompanying prodigies, is minutely transcribed by Bustamante. The Licentiate shows an appetite for the marvellous which might excite the envy of a monk of the Middle Ages. (See Descripcion, nota, loc. cit.) The English traveller Latrobe accommodates the wonders of nature and art very well to each other, by suggesting that these great masses of stone were transported by means of the mastodon, whose remains are occasionally disinterred in the Mexican Valley. Rambler in Mexico, p. 145.

* [In 1875 Dr. Augustus Le Plongeon, having successfully interpreted certain hieroglyphic inscriptions at Chichen Itza, unearthed, at a distance of four hundred yards from the palace at that place, a statue of Chaac Mol, or Balam (the tiger king), the greatest of the Itza rulers. It was seized by the Mexican officials and sent to the city of Mexico. There, in the courtyard of the National Museum,

numerous specimens of which still exist.[24] They made cups and vases of a lackered or painted wood, impervious to wet and gaudily colored. Their dyes were obtained from both mineral and vegetable substances. Among them was the rich crimson of the cochineal, the modern rival of the famed Tyrian purple. It was introduced into Europe from Mexico, where the curious little insect was nourished with great care on plantations of cactus, since fallen into neglect.[25] The natives were thus enabled to give a brilliant coloring to the webs which were manufactured, of every degree of fineness, from the cotton raised in abundance throughout the warmer regions of the country. They had the art, also, of interweaving with these the delicate hair of rabbits and other animals, which made a cloth of great warmth as well as beauty, of a kind altogether original; and on this they often laid a rich embroidery, of birds, flowers, or some other fanciful device.[26]

[24] A great collection of ancient pottery, with various other specimens of Aztec art, the gift of Messrs. Poinsett and Keating, is deposited in the Cabinet of the American Philosophical Society, at Philadelphia. See the Catalogue, ap. Transactions, vol. iii. p. 510. Another admirable collection may be seen in the Museum of Natural History in New York.—M.

[25] Hernandez, Hist. Plantarum, lib. 6, cap. 116.

[26] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 15.—Boturini, Idea, p. 77.—It is doubtful how far they were

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it may be seen to-day, just opposite its exact duplicate, which was found buried, either in the plaza of Mexico or somewhere in Tlaxcala, some years ago. The story of the discovery seems marvellous in the extreme, but photographs taken at many stages of the exhumation dispel doubt as to its truth. For a very full report upon the whole matter, see the paper by Stephen Salisbury, president of the American Antiquarian Society, in the Proceedings of that society for 1877–78, pp. 70–119.—M.]

But the art in which they most delighted was their *plumaje,* or feather-work. With this they could produce all the effect of a beautiful mosaic. The gorgeous plumage of the tropical birds, especially of the parrot tribe, afforded every variety of color; and the fine down of the humming-bird, which revelled in swarms among the honeysuckle bowers of Mexico, supplied them with soft aerial tints that gave an exquisite finish to the picture. The feathers, pasted on a fine cotton web, were wrought into dresses for the wealthy, hangings for apartments, and ornaments for the temples. No one of the American fabrics excited such admiration in Europe, whither numerous specimens were sent by the Conquerors. It is to be regretted that so graceful an art should have been suffered to fall into decay.[27]

There were no shops in Mexico, but the various

acquainted with the manufacture of silk. Carli supposes that what Cortés calls silk was only the fine texture of hair, or down, mentioned in the text. (Lettres Américaines, tom. i. let. 21.) But it is certain they had a species of caterpillar, unlike our silkworm, indeed, which spun a thread that was sold in the markets of ancient Mexico. See the Essai politique (tom. iii. pp. 66–69), where M. de Humboldt has collected some interesting facts in regard to the culture of silk by the Aztecs. Still, that the fabric should be a matter of uncertainty at all shows that it could not have reached any great excellence or extent.

[27] Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.—Acosta, lib. 4, cap. 37.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 18–21.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 1, cap. 15.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.—Count Carli is in raptures with a specimen of feather-painting which he saw in Strasbourg. "Never did I behold anything so exquisite," he says, "for brilliancy and nice gradation of color, and for beauty of design. No European artist could have made such a thing." (Lettres Américaines, let. 21, note.) There is still one place, Patzquaro, where, according to Bustamante, they preserve some knowledge of this interesting art, though it is practised on a very limited scale and at great cost. Sahagun, ubi supra, nota.

manufactures and agricultural products were brought together for sale in the great market-places of the principal cities. Fairs were held there every fifth day, and were thronged by a numerous concourse of persons, who came to buy or sell from all the neighboring country. A particular quarter was allotted to each kind of article. The numerous transactions were conducted without confusion, and with entire regard to justice, under the inspection of magistrates appointed for the purpose. The traffic was carried on partly by barter, and partly by means of a regulated currency, of different values. This consisted of transparent quills of gold dust; of bits of tin, cut in the form of a T; and of bags of cacao, containing a specified number of grains. "Blessed money," exclaims Peter Martyr, "which exempts its possessors from avarice, since it cannot be long hoarded, nor hidden under ground!" [28]

There did not exist in Mexico that distinction of castes found among the Egyptian and Asiatic nations. It was usual, however, for the son to follow the occupation of his father. The different trades were arranged into something like guilds; each having a particular district of the city appropriated

[28] "O felicem monetam, quæ suavem utilemque præbet humano generi potum, et a tartareâ peste avaritiæ suos immunes servat possessores, quod suffodi aut diu servari nequeat!" De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 4.—(See, also, Carta de Cortés, ap. Lorenzana, p. 100, et seq.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 8, cap. 36.—Toribio, Hist. de los Indios, MS., Parte 3, cap. 8.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.) The substitute for money throughout the Chinese empire was equally simple in Marco Polo's time, consisting of bits of stamped paper, made from the inner bark of the mulberry-tree. See Viaggi di Messer Marco Polo, gentil' huomo Venetiano, lib. 2, cap. 18, ap. Ramusio, tom. ii.

to it, with its own chief, its own tutelar deity, its peculiar festivals, and the like. Trade was held in avowed estimation by the Aztecs. "Apply thyself, my son," was the advice of an aged chief, "to agriculture, or to feather-work, or some other honorable calling. Thus did your ancestors before you. Else how would they have provided for themselves and their families? Never was it heard that nobility alone was able to maintain its possessor." [29] Shrewd maxims, that must have sounded somewhat strange in the ear of a Spanish *hidalgo!* [30]

But the occupation peculiarly respected was that of the merchant. It formed so important and singular a feature of their social economy as to merit a much more particular notice than it has received from historians. The Aztec merchant was a sort of itinerant trader, who made his journeys to the remotest borders of Anahuac, and to the countries beyond, carrying with him merchandise of rich stuffs, jewelry, slaves, and other valuable commodities. The slaves were obtained at the great market of Azcapozalco, not many leagues from the capital, where fairs were regularly held for the sale of these unfortunate beings. They were brought thither by their masters, dressed in their gayest apparel, and instructed to sing, dance, and

[29] "Procurad de saber algun *oficio honroso,* como es el hacer obras de pluma y otros oficios mecánicos. . . . Mirad que tengais cuidado de lo tocante á la agricultura. . . . En ninguna parte he visto que alguno se mantenga por su nobleza." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 17.

[30] Col. de Mendoza, ap. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 71; vol. vi. p. 86.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 41.

display their little stock of personal accomplishments, so as to recommend themselves to the purchaser. Slave-dealing was an honorable calling among the Aztecs.[31]

With this rich freight, the merchant visited the different provinces, always bearing some present of value from his own sovereign to their chiefs, and usually receiving others in return, with a permission to trade. Should this be denied him, or should he meet with indignity or violence, he had the means of resistance in his power. He performed his journeys with a number of companions of his own rank, and a large body of inferior attendants who were employed to transport the goods. Fifty or sixty pounds were the usual load for a man. The whole caravan went armed, and so well provided against sudden hostilities that they could make good their defence, if necessary, till reinforced from home. In one instance, a body of these militant traders stood a siege of four years in the town of Ayotlan, which they finally took from the enemy.[32] Their own government, however, was always prompt to embark in a war on this ground, finding it a very convenient pretext for extending the Mexican empire. It was not unusual to allow the merchants to raise levies themselves, which were placed under their command. It was, moreover, very common for the prince to employ the merchants as a sort of spies, to furnish him information of the state of the countries through which they passed,

[31] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 4, 10–14.
[32] Ibid., lib. 9, cap. 2.

and the dispositions of the inhabitants towards himself.[33]

Thus their sphere of action was much enlarged beyond that of a humble trader, and they acquired a high consideration in the body politic. They were allowed to assume insignia and devices of their own. Some of their number composed what is called by the Spanish writers a council of finance; at least, this was the case in Tezcuco.[34] They were much consulted by the monarch, who had some of them constantly near his person, addressing them by the title of "uncle," which may remind one of that of *primo,* or "cousin," by which a grandee of Spain is saluted by his sovereign. They were allowed to have their own courts, in which civil and criminal cases, not excepting capital, were determined; so that they formed an independent community, as it were, of themselves. And, as their various traffic supplied them with abundant stores of wealth, they enjoyed many of the most essential advantages of an hereditary aristocracy.[35]

[33] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 2, 4.—In the Mendoza Codex is a painting representing the execution of a cacique and his family, with the destruction of his city, for maltreating the persons of some Aztec merchants. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 67.

[34] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 41.—Ixtlilxochitl gives a curious story of one of the royal family of Tezcuco, who offered, with two *other* merchants, *otros mercaderes,* to visit the court of a hostile cacique and bring him dead or alive to the capital. They availed themselves of a drunken revel, at which they were to have been sacrificed, to effect their object. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 62.

[35] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 2, 5.—The ninth book is taken up with an account of the merchants, their pilgrimages, the religious rites on their departure, and the sumptuous way of living on their return. The whole presents a very remarkable picture, showing they enjoyed a consideration, among the half-civilized nations of Anahuac, to which there is no parallel, unless it be that pos-

That trade should prove the path to eminent political preferment in a nation but partially civilized, where the names of soldier and priest are usually the only titles to respect, is certainly an anomaly in history. It forms some contrast to the standard of the more polished monarchies of the Old World, in which rank is supposed to be less dishonored by a life of idle ease or frivolous pleasure than by those active pursuits which promote equally the prosperity of the state and of the individual. If civilization corrects many prejudices, it must be allowed that it creates others.

We shall be able to form a better idea of the actual refinement of the natives by penetrating into their domestic life and observing the intercourse between the sexes. We have, fortunately, the means of doing this. We shall there find the ferocious Aztec frequently displaying all the sensibility of a cultivated nature; consoling his friends under affliction, or congratulating them on their good fortune, as on occasion of a marriage, or of the birth or the baptism of a child, when he was punctilious in his visits, bringing presents of costly dresses and ornaments, or the more simple offering of flowers, equally indicative of his sympathy. The visits at these times, though regulated with all the precision of Oriental courtesy, were accompanied by expressions of the most cordial and affectionate regard.[36]

sessed by the merchant-princes of an Italian republic, or the princely merchants of our own.

[36] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 23–37.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—These complimentary attentions were paid at stated seasons, even during pregnancy. The details are given with

The discipline of children, especially at the public schools, as stated in a previous chapter, was exceedingly severe.[37] But after she had come to a mature age the Aztec maiden was treated by her parents with a tenderness from which all reserve seemed banished. In the counsels to a daughter about to enter into life, they conjured her to preserve simplicity in her manners and conversation, uniform neatness in her attire, with strict attention to personal cleanliness. They inculcated modesty, as the great ornament of a woman, and implicit reverence for her husband; softening their admonitions by such endearing epithets as showed the fulness of a parent's love.[38]

Polygamy was permitted among the Mexicans, though chiefly confined, probably, to the wealthiest

abundant gravity and minuteness by Sahagun, who descends to particulars which his Mexican editor, Bustamante, has excluded, as somewhat too unreserved for the public eye. If they were more so than some of the editor's own notes, they must have been very communicative indeed.

[37] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 112–134.—The Third Part of the Col. de Mendoza (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i.) exhibits the various ingenious punishments devised for the refractory child. The flowery path of knowledge was well strewed with thorns for the Mexican tyro.

[38] Zurita, Rapport, pp. 151–160.—Sahagun has given us the admonitions of both father and mother to the Aztec maiden on her coming to years of discretion. What can be more tender than the beginning of the mother's exhortation? "Hija mia muy amada, muy querida palomita: ya has oido y notado las palabras que tu señor padre te ha dicho; ellas son palabras preciosas, y que raramente se dicen ni se oyen, las quales han procedido de las entrañas y corazon en que estaban atesoradas; y tu muy amado padre bien sabe que eres su hija, engendrada de él, eres su sangre y su carne, y sabe Dios nuestro señor que es así; aunque eres muger, é imágen de tu padre é que mas te puedo decir, hija mia, de lo que ya esta dicho?" (Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 19.) The reader will find this interesting document, which enjoins so much of what is deemed most essential among civilized nations, translated entire in the Appendix, Part 2, No. 1.

classes.[39] And the obligations of the marriage vow, which was made with all the formality of a religious ceremony, were fully recognized, and impressed on both parties. The women are described by the Spaniards as pretty, unlike their unfortunate descendants of the present day, though with the same serious and rather melancholy cast of countenance. Their long black hair, covered, in some parts of the country, by a veil made of the fine web of the *pita,* might generally be seen wreathed with flowers, or, among the richer people, with strings of precious stones, and pearls from the Gulf of California. They appear to have been treated with much consideration by their husbands, and passed their time in indolent tranquillity, or in such feminine occupations as spinning, embroidery, and the like, while their maidens beguiled the hours by the rehearsal of traditionary tales and ballads.[40]

The women partook equally with the men of social festivities and entertainments. These were often conducted on a large scale, both as regards the number of guests and the costliness of the preparations. Numerous attendants, of both sexes, waited at the banquet. The halls were scented with perfumes, and the courts strewed with odorif-

[39] Yet we find the remarkable declaration, in the counsels of a father to his son, that, for the multiplication of the species, God ordained one man only for one woman. "Nota, hijo mio, lo que te digo, mira que el mundo ya tiene este estilo de engendrar y multiplicar, y para esta generacion y multiplicacion, ordenó Dios que una muger usase de un varon, y un varon de una muger." Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 21.

[40] Ibid., lib. 6, cap. 21–23; lib. 8, cap. 23.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 305.—Carta del Lic. Zuazo, MS.

erous herbs and flowers, which were distributed in profusion among the guests, as they arrived. Cotton napkins and ewers of water were placed before them, as they took their seats at the board; for the venerable ceremony of ablution [41] before and after eating was punctiliously observed by the Aztecs.[42] Tobacco was then offered to the company, in pipes, mixed up with aromatic substances, or in the form of cigars, inserted in tubes of tortoise-shell or silver. They compressed the nostrils with the fingers, while they inhaled the smoke, which they frequently swallowed. Whether the women, who sat apart from the men at table, were allowed the indulgence of the fragrant weed, as in the most pol-

[41] As old as the heroic age of Greece, at least. We may fancy ourselves at the table of Penelope, where water in golden ewers was poured into silver basins for the accommodation of her guests, before beginning the repast:

> "Χέρνιβα δ' ἀμφίπολος προχόῳ ἐπέχευε φέρουσα
> Καλῇ, χρυσείῃ, ὑπὲρ ἀργυρέοιο λέβητος,
> Νίψασθαι · παρὰ δὲ ξεστὴν ἐτάνυσσε τράπεζαν."
>
> ΟΔΥΣΣ. Α.

The feast affords many other points of analogy to the Aztec, inferring a similar stage of civilization in the two nations. One may be surprised, however, to find a greater profusion of the precious metals in the barren isle of Ithaca than in Mexico. But the poet's fancy was a richer mine than either.

[42] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 22.—Amidst some excellent advice of a parent to his son, on his general deportment, we find the latter punctiliously enjoined not to take his seat at the board till he has washed his face and hands, and not to leave it till he has repeated the same thing, and *cleansed his teeth.* The directions are given with a precision worthy of an Asiatic. "Al principio de la comida labarte has las manos y la boca, y donde te juntares con otros á comer, no te sientes luego; mas antes tomarás el agua y la jícara para que se laben los otros, y echarles has agua á las manos, y despues de esto, cojerás lo que se ha caido por el suelo y barrerás el lugar de la comida, y tambien despues de comer lavarás te las manos y la boca, y limpiarás los dientes." Ibid., loc. cit.

ished circles of modern Mexico, is not told us. It is a curious fact that the Aztecs also took the dried leaf in the pulverized form of snuff.[43]

The table was well provided with substantial meats, especially game; among which the most conspicuous was the turkey, erroneously supposed, as its name imports, to have come originally from the East.[44] These more solid dishes were flanked by others of vegetables and fruits, of every deli-

[43] Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, cap. 37.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 227. —The Aztecs used to smoke after dinner, to prepare for the *siesta,* in which they indulged themselves as regularly as an old Castilian. —Tobacco, in Mexican *yetl,* is derived from a Haytian word, *tabaco.* The natives of Hispaniola, being the first with whom the Spaniards had much intercourse, have supplied Europe with the names of several important plants.—Tobacco, in some form or other, was used by almost all the tribes of the American continent, from the Northwest Coast to Patagonia. (See McCulloh, Researches, pp. 91–94.) Its manifold virtues, both social and medicinal, are profusely panegyrized by Hernandez, in his Hist. Plantarum, lib. 2, cap. 109.

[44] This noble bird was introduced into Europe from Mexico. The Spaniards called it *gallopavo,* from its resemblance to the peacock. See Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio (tom. iii. fol. 306); also Oviedo (Rel. Sumaria, cap. 38), the earliest naturalist who gives an account of the bird, which he saw soon after the Conquest, in the West Indies, whither it had been brought, as he says, from New Spain. The Europeans, however, soon lost sight of its origin, and the name "turkey" intimated the popular belief of its Eastern origin. Several eminent writers have maintained its Asiatic or African descent; but they could not impose on the sagacious and better-instructed Buffon. (See Histoire naturelle, art. *Dindon.*) The Spaniards saw immense numbers of turkeys in the domesticated state, on their arrival in Mexico, where they were more common than any other poultry. They were found wild, not only in New Spain, but all along the continent, in the less frequented places, from the Northwestern territory of the United States to Panamá. The wild turkey is larger, more beautiful, and every way an incomparably finer bird than the tame. Franklin, with some point, as well as pleasantry, insists on its preference to the bald eagle as the national emblem. (See his Works, vol. x. p. 63, in Sparks's excellent edition.) In-

cious variety found on the North American continent. The different viands were prepared in various ways, with delicate sauces and seasoning, of which the Mexicans were very fond. Their palate was still further regaled by confections and pastry, for which their maize-flour and sugar supplied ample materials. One other dish, of a disgusting nature, was sometimes added to the feast, especially when the celebration partook of a religious character. On such occasions a slave was sacrificed, and his flesh, elaborately dressed, formed one of the chief ornaments of the banquet. Cannibalism, in the guise of an Epicurean science, becomes even the more revolting.[45]

The meats were kept warm by chafing-dishes. The table was ornamented with vases of silver, and sometimes gold, of delicate workmanship. The drinking-cups and spoons were of the same costly materials, and likewise of tortoise-shell. The favorite beverage was the *chocolatl,* flavored with vanilla and different spices. They had a way of preparing the froth of it, so as to make it almost solid enough to be eaten, and took it cold.[46] The

teresting notices of the history and habits of the wild turkey may be found in the Ornithology both of Buonaparte and of that enthusiastic lover of nature, Audubon, *vox Meleagris, Gallopavo.*

[45] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, cap. 37; lib. 8, cap. 13; lib. 9, cap. 10–14.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. ii. fol. 306.—Father Sahagun has gone into many particulars of the Aztec *cuisine,* and the mode of preparing sundry savory messes, making, all together, no despicable contribution to the noble science of gastronomy.

[46] The froth, delicately flavored with spices and some other ingredients, was taken cold by itself. It had the consistency almost of a solid; and the "Anonymous Conqueror" is very careful to inculcate the importance of "opening the mouth wide, in order to facilitate

fermented juice of the maguey, with a mixture of sweets and acids, supplied, also, various agreeable drinks, of different degrees of strength, and formed the chief beverage of the elder part of the company.[47]

As soon as they had finished their repast, the young people rose from the table, to close the festivities of the day with dancing. They danced gracefully, to the sound of various instruments, accompanying their movements with chants of a pleasing though somewhat plaintive character.[48] The older guests continued at table, sipping *pulque,* and gossiping about other times, till the virtues of the exhilarating beverage put them in good humor with their own. Intoxication was not

deglutition, that the foam may dissolve gradually, and descend imperceptibly, as it were, into the stomach." It was so nutritious that a single cup of it was enough to sustain a man through the longest day's march. (Fol. 306.) The old soldier discusses the beverage *con amore.*

[47] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 4, cap. 37; lib. 8, cap. 13.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Rel. d'un gentil' huomo, ap. Ramusio, tom. iii. fol. 306.

[48] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 7, cap. 8.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 14, cap. 11.—The Mexican nobles entertained minstrels in their houses, who composed ballads suited to the times, or the achievements of their lord, which they chanted, to the accompaniment of instruments, at the festivals and dances. Indeed, there was more or less dancing at most of the festivals, and it was performed in the court-yards of the houses, or in the open squares of the city. (Ibid., ubi supra.) The principal men had, also, buffoons and jugglers in their service, who amused them and astonished the Spaniards by their feats of dexterity and strength (Acosta, lib. 6, cap. 28; also Clavigero (Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. pp. 179–186), who has designed several representations of their exploits, truly surprising). It is natural that a people of limited refinement should find their enjoyment in material rather than intellectual pleasures, and, consequently, should excel in them. The Asiatic nations, as the Hindoos and Chinese, for example, surpass the more polished Europeans in displays of agility and legerdemain.

rare in this part of the company, and, what is singular, was excused in them, though severely punished in the younger. The entertainment was concluded by a liberal distribution of rich dresses and ornaments among the guests, when they withdrew, after midnight, " some commending the feast, and others condemning the bad taste or extravagance of their host; in the same manner," says an old Spanish writer, " as with us." [49] Human nature is, indeed, much the same all the world over.

In this remarkable picture of manners, which I have copied faithfully from the records of earliest date after the Conquest, we find no resemblance to the other races of North American Indians. Some resemblance we may trace to the general style of Asiatic pomp and luxury. But in Asia, woman, far from being admitted to unreserved intercourse with the other sex, is too often jealously immured within the walls of the harem. European civilization, which accords to this loveliest portion of creation her proper rank in the social scale, is still more removed from some of the brutish usages of the Aztecs. That such usages should have existed with the degree of refinement they showed in other things is almost inconceivable. It can only be explained as the result of religious superstition; superstition which clouds the moral perception, and perverts even the natural senses, till man, civilized

[49] " Y de esta manera pasaban gran rato de la noche, y se despedian, é iban á sus casas, unos alabando la fiesta, y otros murmurando de las demasías y excesos, cosa mui ordinaria en los que á semejantes actos se juntan." Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 13, cap. 23.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 9, cap. 10–14.

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man, is reconciled to the very things which are most revolting to humanity. Habits and opinions founded on religion must not be taken as conclusive evidence of the actual refinement of a people.

The Aztec character was perfectly original and unique. It was made up of incongruities apparently irreconcilable. It blended into one the marked peculiarities of different nations, not only of the same phase of civilization, but as far removed from each other as the extremes of barbarism and refinement. It may find a fitting parallel in their own wonderful climate, capable of producing, on a few square leagues of surface, the boundless variety of vegetable forms which belong to the frozen regions of the North, the temperate zone of Europe, and the burning skies of Arabia and Hindostan.

One of the works repeatedly consulted and referred to in this Introduction is Boturini's *Idea de una nueva Historia general de la América Septentrional.* The singular persecutions sustained by its author, even more than the merits of his book, have associated his name inseparably with the literary history of Mexico. The Chevalier Lorenzo Boturini Benaduci was a Milanese by birth, of an ancient family, and possessed of much learning. From Madrid, where he was residing, he passed over to New Spain, in 1735, on some business of the Countess of Santibañez, a lineal descendant of Montezuma. While employed on this, he visited the celebrated shrine of Our Lady of Guadaloupe, and, being a person of devout and enthusiastic temper, was filled with the desire of collecting testimony to establish the marvellous fact of her apparition. In the course of his excursions, made with this view, he fell in with many relics of Aztec antiquity, and conceived—what to a Protestant, at least, would seem much more rational—the idea of gathering together all the memorials he could meet with of the primitive civilization of the land.

In pursuit of this double object, he penetrated into the remotest parts of the country, living much with the natives, passing his nights sometimes in their huts, sometimes in caves and the depths of the lonely forests. Frequently months would elapse without his being

able to add anything to his collection; for the Indians had suffered too much not to be very shy of Europeans. His long intercourse with them, however, gave him ample opportunity to learn their language and popular traditions, and, in the end, to amass a large stock of materials, consisting of hieroglyphical charts on cotton, skins, and the fibre of the maguey; besides a considerable body of Indian manuscripts, written after the Conquest. To all these must be added the precious documents for placing beyond controversy the miraculous apparition of the Virgin. With this treasure he returned, after a pilgrimage of eight years, to the capital.

His zeal, in the mean while, had induced him to procure from Rome a bull authorizing the coronation of the sacred image at Guadaloupe. The bull, however, though sanctioned by the Audience of New Spain, had never been approved by the Council of the Indies. In consequence of this informality, Boturini was arrested in the midst of his proceedings, his papers were taken from him, and, as he declined to give an inventory of them, he was thrown into prison, and confined in the same apartment with two criminals! Not long afterward he was sent to Spain. He there presented a memorial to the Council of the Indies, setting forth his manifold grievances, and soliciting redress. At the same time, he drew up his "Idea," above noticed, in which he displayed the catalogue of his *museum* in New Spain, declaring, with affecting earnestness, that "he would not exchange these treasures for all the gold and silver, diamonds and pearls, in the New World."

After some delay, the Council gave an award in his favor; acquitting him of any intentional violation of the law, and pronouncing a high encomium on his deserts. His papers, however, were not restored. But his Majesty was graciously pleased to appoint him Historiographer-General of the Indies, with a salary of one thousand dollars per annum. The stipend was too small to allow him to return to Mexico. He remained in Madrid, and completed there the first volume of a "General History of North America," in 1749. Not long after this event, and before the publication of the work, he died. The same injustice was continued to his heirs; and, notwithstanding repeated applications in their behalf, they were neither put in possession of their unfortunate kinsman's collection, nor received a remuneration for it. What was worse,—as far as the public was concerned,—the collection itself was deposited in apartments of the vice-regal palace at Mexico, so damp that they gradually fell to pieces, and the few remaining were still further diminished by the pilfering of *the curious*. When Baron Humboldt visited Mexico, not one-eighth of this inestimable treasure was in existence!

I have been thus particular in the account of the unfortunate Boturini, as affording, on the whole, the most remarkable example of the serious obstacles and persecutions which literary enterprise, directed in the path of the national antiquities, has, from some cause or other, been exposed to in New Spain.

Boturini's manuscript volume was never printed, and probably never will be, if indeed it is in existence. This will scarcely prove a great detriment to science or to his own reputation. He was a man of a zealous temper, strongly inclined to the marvellous, with little of that acuteness requisite for penetrating the tangled mazes of antiquity, or of the philosophic spirit fitted for calmly weighing its doubts and difficulties. His " Idea " affords a sample of his peculiar mind. With abundant learning, ill assorted and ill digested, it is a jumble of fact and puerile fiction, interesting details, crazy dreams, and fantastic theories. But it is hardly fair to judge by the strict rules of criticism a work which, put together hastily, as a catalogue of literary treasures, was designed by the author rather to show what might be done, than that he could do it himself. It is rare that talents for action and contemplation are united in the same individual. Boturini was eminently qualified, by his enthusiasm and perseverance, for collecting the materials necessary to illustrate the antiquities of the country. It requires a more highly gifted mind to avail itself of them.

CHAPTER VI *

THE TEZCUCANS—THEIR GOLDEN AGE—ACCOMPLISHED PRINCES—DECLINE OF THEIR MONARCHY

THE reader would gather but an imperfect notion of the civilization of Anahuac, without some account of the Acolhuans, or Tezcucans, as they are usually called; a nation of the same great family with the Aztecs, whom they rivalled in power and surpassed in intellectual culture and the arts of social refinement. Fortunately, we have ample materials for this in the records left by Ixtlilxochitl, a lineal descendant of the royal line of Tezcuco, who flourished in the century of the Conquest. With every opportunity for information he combined much industry and talent, and, if his narrative bears the high coloring of one who would revive the faded glories of an ancient but dilapi-

* [In reading this chapter we must constantly bear in mind the fact that it is founded almost entirely upon traditions. We must also remember—first, that Ixtlilxochitl is the principal authority for the legends therein chronicled; second, that Ixtlilxochitl possessed a very fertile imagination; third, that Ixtlilxochitl's "Historia Chichimeca" was not written from an entirely unprejudiced point of view. To use the words of Bandelier (Archæological Tour in Mexico, p. 192): "Ixtlilxochitl is always a very suspicious authority, not because he is more confused than any other Indian writer, but because he wrote for an interested object, and with the view of sustaining tribal claims in the eyes of the Spanish government.—M.]

dated house, he has been uniformly commended for his fairness and integrity, and has been followed without misgiving by such Spanish writers as could have access to his manuscripts.[1] I shall confine myself to the prominent features of the two reigns which may be said to embrace the golden age of Tezcuco, without attempting to weigh the probability of the details, which I will leave to be settled by the reader, according to the measure of his faith.

The Acolhuans came into the Valley, as we have seen, about the close of the twelfth century, and built their capital of Tezcuco on the eastern borders of the lake, opposite to Mexico. From this point they gradually spread themselves over the northern portion of Anahuac, when their career was checked by an invasion of a kindred race, the Tepanecs, who, after a desperate struggle, succeeded in taking their city, slaying their monarch, and entirely subjugating his kingdom.[2] This event took place about 1418; and the young prince, Nezahualcoyotl, the heir to the crown, then fifteen years old, saw his father butchered before his eyes, while he himself lay concealed among the friendly branches of a tree which overshadowed the spot.[3] His subsequent history is as full of romantic daring and perilous escapes as that of the renowned Scanderbeg or of the " young Chevalier." [4]

[1] For a criticism on this writer, see the Postscript to this chapter.

[2] See Chapter I. of this Introduction, p. 17.

[3] Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 9.—Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 19.

[4] The adventures of the former hero are told with his usual spirit by Sismondi (Républiques Italiennes, chap. 79). It is hardly nec-

Not long after his flight from the field of his father's blood, the Tezcucan prince fell into the hands of his enemy, was borne off in triumph to his city, and was thrown into a dungeon. He effected his escape, however, through the connivance of the governor of the fortress, an old servant of his family, who took the place of the royal fugitive, and paid for his loyalty with his life. He was at length permitted, through the intercession of the reigning family in Mexico, which was allied to him, to retire to that capital, and subsequently to his own, where he found a shelter in his ancestral palace. Here he remained unmolested for eight years, pursuing his studies under an old preceptor, who had had the care of his early youth, and who instructed him in the various duties befitting his princely station.[5]

At the end of this period the Tepanec usurper died, bequeathing his empire to his son, Maxtla, a man of fierce and suspicious temper. Nezahualcoyotl hastened to pay his obeisance to him, on his accession. But the tyrant refused to receive the little present of flowers which he laid at his feet, and turned his back on him in presence of his chieftains. One of his attendants, friendly to the young prince, admonished him to provide for his own safety, by withdrawing, as speedily as possible, from the palace, where his life was in danger. He lost no time, consequently, in retreating from the

essary, for the latter, to refer the English reader to Chambers's "History of the Rebellion of 1745;" a work which proves how thin is the partition in human life which divides romance from reality.

[5] Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 10.

inhospitable court, and returned to Tezcuco. Maxtla, however, was bent on his destruction. He saw with jealous eye the opening talents and popular manners of his rival, and the favor he was daily winning from his ancient subjects.[6]

He accordingly laid a plan for making away with him at an evening entertainment. It was defeated by the vigilance of the prince's tutor, who contrived to mislead the assassins and to substitute another victim in the place of his pupil.[7] The baffled tyrant now threw off all disguise, and sent a strong party of soldiers to Tezcuco, with orders to enter the palace, seize the person of Nezahualcoyotl, and slay him on the spot. The prince, who became acquainted with the plot through the watchfulness of his preceptor, instead of flying, as he was counselled, resolved to await his enemies. They found him playing at ball, when they arrived, in the court of his palace. He received them courteously, and invited them in, to take some refreshments after their journey. While they were occupied in this way, he passed into an adjoining saloon, which excited no suspicion, as he was still visible through the open doors by which the apartments communicated with each other. A burning censer stood in the passage, and, as it was fed by the attendants, threw up such clouds of incense as obscured his movements from the soldiers. Under this friendly veil he succeeded in making

[6] Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 10.—Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 20–24.

[7] Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 25. The contrivance was effected by means of an extraordinary personal resemblance of the parties; a fruitful source of comic—as every reader of the drama knows—though rarely of tragic interest.

his escape by a secret passage, which communicated with a large earthen pipe formerly used to bring water to the palace.[8] Here he remained till nightfall, when, taking advantage of the obscurity, he found his way into the suburbs, and sought a shelter in the cottage of one of his father's vassals.

The Tepanec monarch, enraged at this repeated disappointment, ordered instant pursuit. A price was set on the head of the royal fugitive. Whoever should take him, dead or alive, was promised, however humble his degree, the hand of a noble lady, and an ample domain along with it. Troops of armed men were ordered to scour the country in every direction. In the course of the search, the cottage in which the prince had taken refuge was entered. But he fortunately escaped detection by being hid under a heap of maguey fibres used for manufacturing cloth. As this was no longer a proper place of concealment, he sought a retreat in the mountainous and woody district lying between the borders of his own state and Tlascala.[9]

Here he led a wretched, wandering life, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, hiding himself in deep thickets and caverns, and stealing out, at night, to satisfy the cravings of appetite; while he was kept in constant alarm by the activity of his pursuers, always hovering on his track. On one

[8] It was customary, on entering the presence of a great lord, to throw aromatics into the censer. "Hecho en el brasero incienso y copal, que era uso y costumbre donde estaban los Reyes y Señores, cada vez que los criados entraban con mucha reverencia y acatamiento echaban sahumerio en el brasero; y así coneste perfume se obscurecia algo la sala." Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 11.

[9] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 26.—Relaciones, MS., No. 11.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 47.

occasion he sought refuge from them among a small party of soldiers, who proved friendly to him and concealed him in a large drum around which they were dancing. At another time he was just able to turn the crest of a hill as his enemies were climbing it on the other side, when he fell in with a girl who was reaping *chia,*—a Mexican plant, the seed of which was much used in the drinks of the country. He persuaded her to cover him up with the stalks she had been cutting. When his pursuers came up, and inquired if she had seen the fugitive, the girl coolly answered that she had, and pointed out a path as the one he had taken. Notwithstanding the high rewards offered, Nezahualcoyotl seems to have incurred no danger from treachery, such was the general attachment felt to himself and his house. "Would you not deliver up the prince, if he came in your way?" he inquired of a young peasant who was unacquainted with his person. "Not I," replied the other. "What, not for a fair lady's hand, and a rich dowry beside?" rejoined the prince. At which the other only shook his head and laughed.[10] On more than one occasion his faithful people submitted to torture, and even to lose their lives, rather than disclose the place of his retreat.[11]

However gratifying such proofs of loyalty

[10] "Nezahualcoiotzin le dixo, que si viese á quien buscaban, si lo iría á denunciar? respondió, que no; tornándole á replicar diciéndole, que haria mui mal en perder una muger hermosa y lo deams que el rey Maxtla prometia, el mancebo se rió de todo, no haciendo caso ni de lo uno ni de lo otro." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 27.

[11] Ibid., MS., cap. 26, 27.—Relaciones, MS., No. 11.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 47, 48.

might be to his feelings, the situation of the prince in these mountain solitudes became every day more distressing. It gave a still keener edge to his own sufferings to witness those of the faithful followers who chose to accompany him in his wanderings. "Leave me," he would say to them, "to my fate! Why should you throw away your own lives for one whom fortune is never weary of persecuting?" Most of the great Tezcucan chiefs had consulted their interests by a timely adhesion to the usurper. But some still clung to their prince, preferring proscription, and death itself, rather than desert him in his extremity.[12]

In the mean time, his friends at a distance were active in measures for his relief. The oppressions of Maxtla, and his growing empire, had caused general alarm in the surrounding states, who recalled the mild rule of the Tezcucan princes. A coalition was formed, a plan of operations concerted, and, on the day appointed for a general rising, Nezahualcoyotl found himself at the head of a force sufficiently strong to face his Tepanec adversaries. An engagement came on, in which the latter were totally discomfited; and the victorious prince, receiving everywhere on his route the homage of his joyful subjects, entered his capital, not like a proscribed outcast, but as the rightful heir, and saw himself once more enthroned in the halls of his fathers.

Soon after, he united his forces with the Mexicans, long disgusted with the arbitrary conduct of Maxtla. The allied powers, after a series of

[12] Ixtlilxochitl, MSS., ubi supra.—Veytia, ubi supra.

bloody engagements with the usurper, routed him under the walls of his own capital. He fled to the baths, whence he was dragged out, and sacrificed with the usual cruel ceremonies of the Aztecs; the royal city of Azcapozalco was razed to the ground, and the wasted territory was henceforth reserved as the great slave-market for the nations of Anahuac.[13]

These events were succeeded by the remarkable league among the three powers of Tezcuco, Mexico, and Tlacopan, of which some account has been given in a previous chapter.[14] Historians are not agreed as to the precise terms of it; the writers of the two former nations each insisting on the paramount authority of his own in the coalition. All agree in the subordinate position of Tlacopan, a state, like the others, bordering on the lake. It is certain that in their subsequent operations, whether of peace or war, the three states shared in each other's councils, embarked in each other's enterprises, and moved in perfect concert together, till just before the coming of the Spaniards.

The first measure of Nezahualcoyotl, on returning to his dominions, was a general amnesty. It was his maxim "that a monarch might punish, but revenge was unworthy of him."[15] In the present instance he was averse even to punish, and not only freely pardoned his rebel nobles, but conferred on some, who had most deeply offended, posts of

[13] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 28–31.—Relaciones, MS., No. 11.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 2, cap. 51–54.

[14] See page 21 of this volume.

[15] "Que venganza no es justo la procuren los Reyes, sino castigar al que lo mereciere." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

honor and confidence. Such conduct was doubtless politic, especially as their alienation was owing, probably, much more to fear of the usurper than to any disaffection towards himself. But there are some acts of policy which a magnanimous spirit only can execute.

The restored monarch next set about repairing the damages sustained under the late misrule, and reviving, or rather remodelling, the various departments of government. He framed a concise, but comprehensive, code of laws, so well suited, it was thought, to the exigencies of the times, that it was adopted as their own by the two other members of the triple alliance. It was written in blood, and entitled the author to be called the Draco rather than "the Solon of Anahuac," as he is fondly styled by his admirers.[16] Humanity is one of the best fruits of refinement. It is only with increasing civilization that the legislator studies to economize human suffering, even for the guilty; to devise penalties not so much by way of punishment for the past as of reformation for the future.[17]

He divided the burden of government among a number of departments, as the council of war, the council of finance, the council of justice. This last was a court of supreme authority, both in civil and

[16] See Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 247.—Nezahualcoyotl's code consisted of eighty laws, of which thirty-four only have come down to us, according to Veytia. (Hist. antig., tom. iii. p. 224, nota.) Ixtlilxochitl enumerates several of them. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 38, and Relaciones, MS., Ordenanzas.

[17] Nowhere are these principles kept more steadily in view than in the various writings of our adopted countryman Dr. Lieber, having more or less to do with the theory of legislation. Such works could not have been produced before the nineteenth century.

criminal matters, receiving appeals from the lower tribunals of the provinces, which were obliged to make a full report, every four months, or eighty days, of their own proceedings to this higher judicature. In all these bodies, a certain number of citizens were allowed to have seats with the nobles and professional dignitaries. There was, however, another body, a council of state, for aiding the king in the despatch of business, and advising him in matters of importance, which was drawn altogether from the highest order of chiefs. It consisted of fourteen members; and they had seats provided for them at the royal table.[18]

Lastly, there was an extraordinary tribunal, called the council of music, but which, differing from the import of its name, was devoted to the encouragement of science and art. Works on astronomy, chronology, history, or any other science, were required to be submitted to its judgment, before they could be made public. This censorial power was of some moment, at least with regard to the historical department, where the wilful perversion of truth was made a capital offence by the bloody code of Nezahualcoyotl. Yet a Tezcucan author must have been a bungler, who could not elude a conviction under the cloudy veil of hieroglyphics. This body, which was drawn from the best-instructed persons in the kingdom, with little regard to rank, had supervision of all the pro-

[18] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 7.—According to Zurita, the principal judges, at their general meetings every four months, constituted also a sort of parliament or córtes, for advising the king on matters of state. See his Rapport, p. 106; also *ante*, p. 33.

ductions of art, and of the nicer fabrics. It decided on the qualifications of the professors in the various branches of science, on the fidelity of their instructions to their pupils, the deficiency of which was severely punished, and it instituted examinations of these latter. In short, it was a general board of education for the country. On stated days, historical compositions, and poems treating of moral or traditional topics, were recited before it by their authors. Seats were provided for the three crowned heads of the empire, who deliberated with the other members on the respective merits of the pieces, and distributed prizes of value to the successful competitors.[19]

Such are the marvellous accounts transmitted to us of this institution; an institution certainly not to have been expected among the aborigines of America. It is calculated to give us a higher idea of the refinement of the people than even the noble architectural remains which still cover some parts of the continent. Architecture is, to a certain extent, a sensual gratification. It addresses itself to the eye, and affords the best scope for the parade of barbaric pomp and splendor. It is the

[19] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. ii. p. 137.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 7.—"Concurrian á este consejo las tres cabezas del imperio, en ciertos dias, á oir cantar las poesías históricas antiguas y modernas, para instruirse de toda su historia, y tambien cuando habia algun nuevo invento en cualquiera facultad, para examinarlo, aprobarlo, ó reprobarlo. Delante de las sillas de los reyes habia una gran mesa cargada de joyas de oro y plata, pedrería, plumas, y otras cosas estimables, y en los rincones de la sala muchas de mantas de todas calidades, para premios de las habilidades y estímulo de los profesores, las cuales alhajas repartian los reyes, en los dias que concurrian, á los que se aventajaban en el ejercicio ne sus facultades." Ibid.

form in which the revenues of a semi-civilized people are most likely to be lavished. The most gaudy and ostentatious specimens of it, and sometimes the most stupendous, have been reared by such hands. It is one of the first steps in the great march of civilization. But the institution in question was evidence of still higher refinement. It was a literary luxury, and argued the existence of a taste in the nation which relied for its gratification on pleasures of a purely intellectual character.

The influence of this academy must have been most propitious to the capital, which became the nursery not only of such sciences as could be compassed by the scholarship of the period, but of various useful and ornamental arts. Its historians, orators, and poets were celebrated throughout the country.[20] Its archives, for which accommodations were provided in the royal palace, were stored with the records of primitive ages.[21] Its idiom, more polished than the Mexican, was, indeed, the purest of all the Nahuatlac dialects, and continued, long after the Conquest, to be that in which the best productions of the native races were composed.

[20] Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 3, cap. 7.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 247.—The latter author enumerates four historians, some of much repute, of the royal house of Tezcuco, descendants of the great Nezahualcoyotl. See his Account of Writers, tom. i. pp. 6–21.

[21] "En la ciudad de Tezcuco estaban los Archivos Reales de todas las cosas referidas, por haver sido la Metrópoli de todas las ciencias, usos, y buenas costumbres, porque los Reyes que fuéron de ella se preciáron de esto." (Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Prólogo.) It was from the poor wreck of these documents, once so carefully preserved by his ancestors, that the historian gleaned the materials, as he informs us, for his own works.

Tezcuco claimed the glory of being the Athens of the Western world.[22]

Among the most illustrious of her bards was the emperor himself,—for the Tezcucan writers claim this title for their chief, as head of the imperial alliance. He doubtless appeared as a competitor before that very academy where he so often sat as a critic. Many of his odes descended to a late generation, and are still preserved, perhaps, in some of the dusty repositories of Mexico or Spain.[23] The historian Ixtlilxochitl has left a translation, in Castilian, of one of the poems of his royal ancestor. It is not easy to render his version into corresponding English rhyme, without the perfume of the original escaping in this double filtration.[24] They remind one of the rich breathings of Spanish-Arab poetry, in which an ardent imagination is tempered by a not unpleasing and moral melancholy.[25] But, though sufficiently florid

[22] "Aunque es tenida la lengua Mejicana por materna, y la Tezcucana por mas cortesana y pulida." (Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) "Tezcuco," says Boturini, "where the noblemen sent their sons to acquire the most polished dialect of the Nahuatlac language, and to study poetry, moral philosophy, the heathen theology, astronomy, medicine, and history." Idea, p. 142.

[23] "He composed sixty songs," says the author last quoted, "which have probably perished by the incendiary hands of the ignorant." (Idea, p. 79.) Boturini had translations of two of these in his museum (Catálogo, p. 8), and another has since come to light.

[24] Difficult as the task may be, it has been executed by the hand of a fair friend, who, while she has adhered to the Castilian with singular fidelity, has shown a grace and flexibility in her poetical movements which the Castilian version, and probably the Mexican original, cannot boast. See both translations in Appendix, 2, No. 2.

[25] Numerous specimens of this may be found in Condé's "Dominacion de los Árabes en España." None of them are superior to

in diction, they are generally free from the meretricious ornaments and hyperbole with which the minstrelsy of the East is usually tainted. They turn on the vanities and mutability of human life, —a topic very natural for a monarch who had himself experienced the strangest mutations of fortune. There is mingled in the lament of the Tezcucan bard, however, an Epicurean philosophy, which seeks relief from the fears of the future in the joys of the present. "Banish care," he says: "if there are bounds to pleasure, the saddest life must also have an end. Then weave the chaplet of flowers, and sing thy songs in praise of the all-powerful God, for the glory of this world soon fadeth away. Rejoice in the green freshness of thy spring; for the day will come when thou shalt sigh for these joys in vain; when the sceptre shall pass from thy hands, thy servants shall wander desolate in thy courts, thy sons, and the sons of thy nobles, shall drink the dregs of distress, and all the pomp of thy victories and triumphs shall live only in their recollection. Yet the remembrance of the just shall not pass away from the nations, and the good thou hast done shall ever be held in honor. The goods of this life, its glories and its riches, are but lent to us, its substance is but an illusory shadow, and the things of to-day shall change on the coming of the morrow. Then gather the fairest flowers from thy gardens, to bind round

the plaintive strains of the royal Abderahman on the solitary palm-tree which reminded him of the pleasant land of his birth. See Parte 2, cap. 9.

thy brow, and seize the joys of the present ere they perish." [26]

But the hours of the Tezcucan monarch were not all passed in idle dalliance with the Muse, nor in the sober contemplations of philosophy, as at a later period. In the freshness of youth and early manhood he led the allied armies in their annual expeditions, which were certain to result in a wider extent of territory to the empire.[27] In the intervals of peace he fostered those productive arts which are the surest sources of public prosperity. He encouraged agriculture above all; and there was

[26] "Io tocaré cantando
El músico instrumento sonoroso,
Tú de flores gozando
Danza, y festeja á Dios que es poderoso;
O gozemos de esta gloria,
Porque la humana vida es transitoria."
MS. DE IXTLILXOCHITL.

The sentiment, which is common enough, is expressed with uncommon beauty by the English poet Herrick:

"Gather the rosebuds while you may;
Old Time is still a-flying;
The fairest flower that blooms to-day
To-morrow may be dying."

And with still greater beauty, perhaps, by Racine:

"Rions, chantons, dit cette troupe impie,
De fleurs en fleurs, de plaisirs en plaisirs,
Promenons nos désirs.
Sur l'avenir insensé qui se fie.
De nos ans passagers le nombre est incertain.
Hâtons-nous aujourd'hui de jouir de la vie;
Qui sait si nous serons demain?"
ATHALIE, Acte 2.

It is interesting to see under what different forms the same sentiment is developed by different races and in different languages. It is an Epicurean sentiment, indeed, but its universality proves its truth to nature.

[27] Some of the provinces and places thus conquered were held by the allied powers in common; Tlacopan, however, only receiving one-fifth of the tribute. It was more usual to annex the vanquished territory to that one of the two great states to which it lay nearest. See Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 38.—Zurita, Rapport, p. 11.

scarcely a spot so rude, or a steep so inaccessible, as not to confess the power of cultivation. The land was covered with a busy population, and towns and cities sprang up in places since deserted or dwindled into miserable villages.[28]

From resources thus enlarged by conquest and domestic industry, the monarch drew the means for the large consumption of his own numerous household,[29] and for the costly works which he executed for the convenience and embellishment of the capital. He filled it with stately edifices for his nobles, whose constant attendance he was anxious to secure at his court.[30] He erected a magnificent pile of buildings which might serve both for a royal

[28] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 41. The same writer, in another work, calls the population of Tezcuco, at this period, double of what it was at the Conquest; founding his estimate on the royal registers, and on the numerous remains of edifices still visible in his day, in places now depopulated. "Parece en las historias que en este tiempo, antes que se destruyesen, havia doblado mas gente de la que halló al tiempo que vino Cortés, y los demas Españoles: porque yo hallo en los padrones reales, que el menor pueblo tenía 1100 vecinos, y de allí para arriba, y ahora no tienen 200 vecinos, y aun en algunas partes de todo punto se han acabado. . . . Como se hecha de ver en las ruinas, hasta los mas altos montes y sierras tenian sus sementeras, y casas principales para vivir y morar." Relaciones, MS., No. 9.

[29] Torquemada has extracted the particulars of the yearly expenditure of the palace from the royal account-book, which came into the historian's possession. The following are some of the items, namely: 4,900,300 fanegas of maize (the *fanega* is equal to about one hundred pounds); 2,744,000 fanegas of cacao; 8000 turkeys; 1300 baskets of salt; besides an incredible quantity of game of every kind, vegetables, condiments, etc. (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 53.) See, also, Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 35.

[30] There were more than four hundred of these lordly residences: "Así mismo hizo edificar muchas casas y palacios para los señores y cavalleros, que asistian en su corte, cada uno conforme á la calidad y méritos de su persona, las quales llegáron á ser mas de quatrocientas tasas de señores y cavalleros de solar conocido." Ibid., cap. 38.

residence and for the public offices. It extended, from east to west, twelve hundred and thirty-four yards, and from north to south, nine hundred and seventy-eight.* It was encompassed by a wall of unburnt bricks and cement, six feet wide and nine high for one half of the circumference, and fifteen feet high for the other half. Within this enclosure were two courts. The outer one was used as the great market-place of the city, and continued to be so until long after the Conquest,—if, indeed, it is not now. The interior court was surrounded by the council-chambers and halls of justice. There were also accommodations there for the foreign ambassadors; and a spacious saloon, with apartments opening into it, for men of science and poets, who pursued their studies in this retreat or met together to hold converse under its marble porticoes. In this quarter, also, were kept the public archives, which fared better under the Indian dynasty than they have since under their European successors.[31]

Adjoining this court were the apartments of the king, including those for the royal harem, as liberally supplied with beauties as that of an Eastern sultan. Their walls were incrusted with alabasters

[31] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36. "Esta plaza cercada de portales, y tenia así mismo por la parte del poniente otra sala grande, y muchos quartos á la redonda, que era la universidad, en donde asistian todos los poetas, históricos, y philósophos del reyno, divididos en sus claves, y academias, conforme era la facultad de cada uno, y así mismo estaban aquí los archivos reales."

* Bancroft, Native Races, vol. ii. p. 162, points out a mistake in translation here, Prescott having made the *estado* the same measure as the vara. The wall was *three times a man's stature* for one half its circumference and *five times a man's stature* for the other half.—M.

and richly-tinted stucco, or hung with gorgeous tapestries of variegated feather-work.* They led through long arcades, and through intricate labyrinths of shrubbery, into gardens where baths and sparkling fountains were overshadowed by tall groves of cedar and cypress. The basins of water were well stocked with fish of various kinds, and the aviaries with birds glowing in all the gaudy plumage of the tropics. Many birds and animals which could not be obtained alive were represented in gold and silver so skilfully as to have furnished the great naturalist Hernandez with models for his work.[32]

Accommodations on a princely scale were provided for the sovereigns of Mexico and Tlacopan

[32] This celebrated naturalist was sent by Philip II to New Spain, and he employed several years in compiling a voluminous work on its various natural productions, with drawings illustrating them. Although the government is said to have expended sixty thousand ducats in effecting this great object, the volumes were not published till long after the author's death. In 1651 a mutilated edition of the part of the work relating to medical botany appeared at Rome.—The original MSS. were supposed to have been destroyed by the great fire in the Escorial, not many years after. Fortunately, another copy, in the author's own hand, was detected by the indefatigable Muñoz, in the library of the Jesuits' College at Madrid, in the latter part of the last century; and a beautiful edition, from the famous press of Ibarra, was published in that capital, under the patronage of government, in 1790. (Hist. Plantarum, Præfatio.—Nic. Antonio, Bibliotheca Hispana Nova (Matriti, 1790), tom. iii. p. 432.) The work of Hernandez is a monument of industry and erudition, the more remarkable as being the first on this difficult subject. And, after all the additional light from the labors of later naturalists, it still holds its place as a book of the highest authority, for the perspicuity, fidelity, and thoroughness with which the multifarious topics in it are discussed.

* The reader who is familiar with the history of the Moors in Spain must inevitably be reminded of the palace in Cordova when he peruses these pages.—M.

when they visited the court. The whole of this lordly pile contained three hundred apartments, some of them fifty yards square.[33] The height of the building is not mentioned. It was probably not great, but supplied the requisite room by the immense extent of ground which it covered. The interior was doubtless constructed of light materials, especially of the rich woods which, in that country, are remarkable, when polished, for the brilliancy and variety of their colors. That the more solid materials of stone and stucco were also liberally employed is proved by the remains at the present day; remains which have furnished an inexhaustible quarry for the churches and other edifices since erected by the Spaniards on the site of the ancient city.[34]

We are not informed of the time occupied in building this palace. But two hundred thousand workmen, it is said, were employed on it.[35] However this may be, it is certain that the Tezcucan monarchs, like those of Asia and ancient Egypt, had the control of immense masses of men, and would sometimes turn the whole population of a

[33] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 36.

[34] "Some of the terraces on which it stood," says Mr. Bullock, speaking of this palace, "are still entire, and covered with cement, very hard, and equal in beauty to that found in ancient Roman buildings. . . . The great church, which stands close by, is almost entirely built of the materials taken from the palace, many of the sculptured stones from which may be seen in the walls, though most of the ornaments are turned inwards. Indeed, our guide informed us that whoever built a house at Tezcuco made the ruins of the palace serve as his quarry." (Six Months in Mexico, chap. 26.) Torquemada notices the appropriation of the materials to the same purpose. Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 45.

[35] Ixtlilxochitl, MS., ubi supra.

conquered city, including the women, into the public works.[36] The most gigantic monuments of architecture which the world has witnessed would never have been reared by the hands of freemen.

Adjoining the palace were buildings for the king's children, who, by his various wives, amounted to no less than sixty sons and fifty daughters.[37] Here they were instructed in all the exercises and accomplishments suited to their station; comprehending, what would scarcely find a place in a royal education on the other side of the Atlantic, the arts of working in metals, jewelry, and feather-mosaic. Once in every four months, the whole household, not excepting the youngest, and including all the officers and attendants on the king's person, assembled in a grand saloon of the palace, to listen to a discourse from an orator, probably one of the priesthood. The princes, on this occasion, were all dressed in *nequen,* the coarsest manufacture of the country. The preacher began by enlarging on the obligations of morality and of respect for the gods, especially important in persons whose rank gave such additional weight to example. He occasionally seasoned his homily with a pertinent application to his audience, if any member of it had been guilty of a notorious delinquency. From this

[36] Thus, to punish the Chalcas for their rebellion, the whole population were compelled, women as well as men, says the chronicler so often quoted, to labor on the royal edifices for four years together; and large granaries were provided with stores for their maintenance in the mean time. Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 46.

[37] If the people in general were not much addicted to polygamy, the sovereign, it must be confessed,—and it was the same, we shall see, in Mexico,—made ample amends for any self-denial on the part of his subjects.

wholesome admonition the monarch himself was not exempted, and the orator boldly reminded him of his paramount duty to show respect for his own laws. The king, so far from taking umbrage, received the lesson with humility; and the audience, we are assured, were often melted into tears by the eloquence of the preacher.[38] This curious scene may remind one of similar usages in the Asiatic and Egyptian despotisms, where the sovereign occasionally condescended to stoop from his pride of place and allow his memory to be refreshed with the conviction of his own mortality.[39] It soothed the feelings of the subject to find himself thus placed, though but for a moment, on a level with his king; while it cost little to the latter, who was removed too far from his people to suffer anything by this short-lived familiarity. It is probable that such an act of public humiliation would have found less favor with a prince less absolute.

Nezahualcoyotl's fondness for magnificence was shown in his numerous villas, which were embellished with all that could make a rural retreat delightful. His favorite residence was at Tezcotzinco, a conical hill about two leagues from the capital.[40] It was laid out in terraces, or hanging gardens, having a flight of steps five hundred and

[38] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 37.

[39] The Egyptian priests managed the affair in a more courtly style, and, while they prayed that all sorts of kingly virtues might descend on the prince, they threw the blame of actual delinquencies on his ministers; thus, "not by the bitterness of reproof," says Diodorus, "but by the allurements of praise, enticing him to an honest way of life." Lib. 1, cap. 70.

[40] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 42.—See Appendix, Part 2, No. 3, for the original description of this royal residence.

twenty in number, many of them hewn in the natural porphyry.[41] In the garden on the summit was a reservoir of water, fed by an aqueduct that was carried over hill and valley, for several miles, on huge buttresses of masonry. A large rock stood in the midst of this basin, sculptured with the hieroglyphics representing the years of Nezahualcoyotl's reign and his principal achievements in each.[42] On a lower level were three other reservoirs, in each of which stood a marble statue of a woman, emblematic of the three states of the empire.* Another tank contained a winged lion, (?) cut out of the solid rock, bearing in its mouth the portrait of the emperor.[43] His likeness had been executed in gold, wood, feather-work, and stone; but this was the only one which pleased him.

From these copious basins the water was distributed in numerous channels through the gar-

[41] "Quinientos y veynte escalones." Davilla Padilla, Historia de la Provincia de Santiago (Madrid, 1596), lib. 2, cap. 81.—This writer, who lived in the sixteenth century, counted the steps himself. Those which were not cut in the rock were crumbling into ruins, as, indeed, every part of the establishment was even then far gone to decay.

[42] On the summit of the mount, according to Padilla, stood an image of a *coyotl*,—an animal resembling a fox,—which, according to tradition, represented an Indian famous for his fasts. It was destroyed by that stanch iconoclast, Bishop Zumárraga, as a relic of idolatry. (Hist. de Santiago, lib. 2, cap. 81.) This figure was, no doubt, the emblem of Nezahualcoyotl himself, whose name, as elsewhere noticed, signified "hungry fox." †

[43] "Hecho de una peña un leon de mas de dos brazas de largo con sus alas y plumas: estaba hechado y mirando á la parte del oriente, en cuia boca asomaba un rostro, que era el mismo retrato del Rey." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 42.

* [Bancroft, Native Races, ii. p. 171, says these figures were not statues but were all cut on the face of the rock border.—M.]

† ["Fasting coyote." This animal, "resembling a fox," is familiar enough to those who dwell in our far Western States.—M.]

dens, or was made to tumble over the rocks in cascades, shedding refreshing dews on the flowers and odoriferous shrubs below. In the depths of this fragrant wilderness, marble porticoes and pavilions were erected, and baths excavated in the solid porphyry, which are still shown by the ignorant natives as the "Baths of Montezuma"![44] The visitor descended by steps cut in the living stone and polished so bright as to reflect like mirrors.[45] Towards the base of the hill, in the midst of cedar groves, whose gigantic branches threw a refreshing coolness over the verdure in the sultriest seasons of the year,[46] rose the royal villa, with its

[44] Bullock speaks of a beautiful basin, twelve feet long by eight wide, having a well five feet by four deep in the centre, etc., etc. Whether truth lies in the bottom of this well is not so clear. Latrobe describes the baths as "two singular basins, perhaps two feet and a half in diameter, not large enough for any monarch bigger than Oberon to take a duck in." (Comp. Six Months in Mexico, chap. 26; and Rambler in Mexico, Let. 7.) Ward speaks much to the same purpose (Mexico in 1827 (London, 1828), vol. ii. p. 296), which agrees with verbal accounts I have received of the same spot.*

[45] "Gradas hechas de la misma peña tan bien gravadas y lizas que parecian espejos." (Ixtlilxochitl, MS., ubi supra.) The travellers just cited notice the beautiful polish still visible in the porphyry.

[46] Padilla saw entire pieces of cedar among the ruins, ninety feet long and four in diameter. Some of the massive portals, he observed, were made of a single stone. (Hist. de Santiago, lib. 11, cap. 81.) Peter Martyr notices an enormous wooden beam, used in the construction of the palaces of Tezcuco, which was one hundred and twenty feet long by eight feet in diameter! The accounts of this and similar huge pieces of timber were so astonishing, he adds, that he could not have received them except on the most unexceptionable testimony. De Orbe Novo, dec. 5, cap. 10.†

* [Mayer, "Mexico as it Was and Is," gives a picture of this "bath," p. 234.—M.]

† [Those who have seen the giant Sequoias of California can easily believe in those "enormous wooden beams." The "Grizzly Giant," still standing in the Mariposa grove, is two hundred and seventy-five feet high and considerably more than thirty feet in diameter at the ground.

light arcades and airy halls, drinking in the sweet perfumes of the gardens. Here the monarch often retired, to throw off the burden of state and refresh his wearied spirits in the society of his favorite wives, reposing during the noontide heats in the embowering shades of his paradise, or mingling, in the cool of the evening, in their festive sports and dances. Here he entertained his imperial brothers of Mexico and Tlacopan, and followed the hardier pleasures of the chase in the noble woods that stretched for miles around his villa, flourishing in all their primeval majesty. Here, too, he often repaired in the latter days of his life, when age had tempered ambition and cooled the ardor of his blood, to pursue in solitude the studies of philosophy and gather wisdom from meditation.

The extraordinary accounts of the Tezcucan architecture are confirmed, in the main, by the relics which still cover the hill of Tezcotzinco or are half buried beneath its surface. They attract little attention, indeed, in the country, where their true history has long since passed into oblivion;[47] while the traveller whose curiosity leads him to the spot speculates on their probable origin, and, as he stumbles over the huge fragments of sculptured

[47] It is much to be regretted that the Mexican government should not take a deeper interest in the Indian antiquities. What might not be effected by a few hands drawn from the idle garrisons of some of the neighboring towns and employed in excavating this ground, "the Mount Palatine" of Mexico! But, unhappily, the age of violence has been succeeded by one of apathy.

Eleven feet from the ground it is more than sixty-four feet in circumference. The Sequoias were not discovered until almost ten years after Prescott wrote this note.—M.]

porphyry and granite, refers them to the primitive races who spread their colossal architecture over the country long before the coming of the Acolhuans and the Aztecs.[48]

The Tezcucan princes were used to entertain a great number of concubines. They had but one lawful wife, to whose issue the crown descended.[49] Nezahualcoyotl remained unmarried to a late period. He was disappointed in an early attachment, as the princess who had been educated in privacy to be the partner of his throne gave her hand to another. The injured monarch submitted the affair to the proper tribunal. The parties, however, were proved to have been ignorant of the destination of the lady, and the court, with an independence which reflects equal honor on the judges who could give and the monarch who could receive the sentence, acquitted the young couple. This story is sadly contrasted by the following.[50]

The king devoured his chagrin in the solitude of his beautiful villa of Tezcotzinco, or sought to divert it by travelling. On one of his journeys he

[48] "They are doubtless," says Mr. Latrobe, speaking of what he calls "these inexplicable ruins," "rather of Toltec than Aztec origin, and, perhaps, with still more probability, attributable to a people of an age yet more remote." (Rambler in Mexico, Let. 7.) "I am of opinion," says Mr. Bullock, "that these were antiquities prior to the discovery of America, and erected by a people whose history was lost even before the building of the city of Mexico.—Who can solve this difficulty?" (Six Months in Mexico, ubi supra.) The reader who takes Ixtlilxochitl for his guide will have no great trouble in solving it. He will find here, as he might, probably, in some other instances, that one need go little higher than the Conquest for the origin of antiquities which claim to be coeval with Phœnicia and ancient Egypt.

[49] Zurita, Rapport, p. 12.

[50] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 43.

was hospitably entertained by a potent vassal, the old lord of Tepechpan, who, to do his sovereign more honor, caused him to be attended at the banquet by a noble maiden, betrothed to himself, and who, after the fashion of the country, had been educated under his own roof. She was of the blood royal of Mexico, and nearly related, moreover, to the Tezcucan monarch. The latter, who had all the amorous temperament of the South, was captivated by the grace and personal charms of the youthful Hebe, and conceived a violent passion for her. He did not disclose it to any one, however, but, on his return home, resolved to gratify it, though at the expense of his own honor, by sweeping away the only obstacle which stood in his path.

He accordingly sent an order to the chief of Tepechpan to take command of an expedition set on foot against the Tlascalans. At the same time he instructed two Tezcucan chiefs to keep near the person of the old lord, and bring him into the thickest of the fight, where he might lose his life. He assured them this had been forfeited by a great crime, but that, from regard for his vassal's past services, he was willing to cover up his disgrace by an honorable death.

The veteran, who had long lived in retirement on his estates, saw himself with astonishment called so suddenly and needlessly into action, for which so many younger men were better fitted. He suspected the cause, and, in the farewell entertainment to his friends, uttered a presentiment of his sad destiny. His predictions were too soon verified;

and a few weeks placed the hand of his virgin bride at her own disposal.

Nezahualcoyotl did not think it prudent to break his passion publicly to the princess so soon after the death of his victim. He opened a correspondence with her through a female relative, and expressed his deep sympathy for her loss. At the same time, he tendered the best consolation in his power, by an offer of his heart and hand. Her former lover had been too well stricken in years for the maiden to remain long inconsolable. She was not aware of the perfidious plot against his life; and, after a decent time, she was ready to comply with her duty, by placing herself at the disposal of her royal kinsman.

It was arranged by the king, in order to give a more natural aspect to the affair and prevent all suspicion of the unworthy part he had acted, that the princess should present herself in his grounds at Tezcotzinco, to witness some public ceremony there. Nezahualcoyotl was standing in a balcony of the palace when she appeared, and inquired, as if struck with her beauty for the first time, "who the lovely young creature was, in his gardens." When his courtiers had acquainted him with her name and rank, he ordered her to be conducted to the palace, that she might receive the attentions due to her station. The interview was soon followed by a public declaration of his passion; and the marriage was celebrated not long after, with great pomp, in the presence of his court, and of his brother monarchs of Mexico and Tlacopan.[51]

[51] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 43.

This story, which furnishes so obvious a counterpart to that of David and Uriah, is told with great circumstantiality, both by the king's son and grandson, from whose narratives Ixtlilxochitl derived it.[52] They stigmatize the action as the basest in their great ancestor's life. It is indeed too base not to leave an indelible stain on any character, however pure in other respects, and exalted.

The king was strict in the execution of his laws, though his natural disposition led him to temper justice with mercy. Many anecdotes are told of the benevolent interest he took in the concerns of his subjects, and of his anxiety to detect and reward merit, even in the most humble. It was common for him to ramble among them in disguise, like the celebrated caliph in the "Arabian Nights," mingling freely in conversation, and ascertaining their actual condition with his own eyes.[53]

On one such occasion, when attended only by a single lord, he met with a boy who was gathering sticks in a field for fuel. He inquired of him "why he did not go into the neighboring forest, where he would find a plenty of them." To which the lad answered, "It was the king's wood, and he would punish him with death if he trespassed there." The royal forests were very extensive in Tezcuco, and were guarded by laws full as severe as those of the Norman tyrants in England. "What kind of man is your king?" asked the

[52] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 43.

[53] "En traje de cazador (que lo acostumbraba á hacer muy de ordinario), saliendo á solas, y disfrazado para que no fuese conocido, á reconocer las faltas y necesidad que havia en la república para remediarlas." Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 46.

monarch, willing to learn the effect of these prohibitions on his own popularity. "A very hard man," answered the boy, "who denies his people what God has given them." [54] Nezahualcoyotl urged him not to mind such arbitrary laws, but to glean his sticks in the forest, as there was no one present who would betray him. But the boy sturdily refused, bluntly accusing the disguised king, at the same time, of being a traitor, and of wishing to bring him into trouble.

Nezahualcoyotl, on returning to the palace, ordered the child and his parents to be summoned before him. They received the orders with astonishment, but, on entering the presence, the boy at once recognized the person with whom he had discoursed so unceremoniously, and he was filled with consternation. The good-natured monarch, however, relieved his apprehensions, by thanking him for the lesson he had given him, and, at the same time, commended his respect for the laws, and praised his parents for the manner in which they had trained their son. He then dismissed the parties with a liberal largess, and afterwards mitigated the severity of the forest laws, so as to allow persons to gather any wood they might find on the ground, if they did not meddle with the standing timber.[55]

Another adventure is told of him, with a poor woodman and his wife, who had brought their little load of billets for sale to the market-place of Tezcuco. The man was bitterly lamenting his hard

[54] "Un hombresillo miserable, pues quita á los hombres lo que Dios á manos llenas les da." Ixtlilxochitl, loc. cit.

[55] Ibid., cap. 46.

lot, and the difficulty with which he earned a wretched subsistence, while the master of the palace before which they were standing lived an idle life, without toil, and with all the luxuries in the world at his command.

He was going on in his complaints, when the good woman stopped him, by reminding him he might be overheard. He was so, by Nezahualcoyotl himself who, standing screened from observation at a latticed window which overlooked the market, was amusing himself, as he was wont, with observing the common people chaffering in the square. He immediately ordered the querulous couple into his presence. They appeared trembling and conscience-struck before him. The king gravely inquired what they had said. As they answered him truly, he told them they should reflect that, if he had great treasures at his command, he had still greater calls for them; that, far from leading an easy life, he was oppressed with the whole burden of government; and concluded by admonishing them "to be more cautious in future, as walls had ears." [56] He then ordered his officers to bring a quantity of cloth and a generous supply of cacao (the coin of the country), and dismissed them. "Go," said he; "with the little you now have, you will be rich; while, with all my riches, I shall still be poor." [57]

It was not his passion to hoard. He dispensed

[56] "Porque las paredes oian." (Ixtlilxochitl, loc. cit.) A European proverb among the American aborigines looks too strange not to make one suspect the hand of the chronicler.

[57] "Le dijo, que con aquello poco le bastaba, y viviria bien aventurado; y él, con toda la máquina que le parecia que tenia arto, no tenia nada; y así lo despidió." Ixtlilxochitl, loc. cit.

his revenues munificently, seeking out poor but meritorious objects on whom to bestow them. He was particularly mindful of disabled soldiers, and those who had in any way sustained loss in the public service, and, in case of their death, extended assistance to their surviving families. Open mendicity was a thing he would never tolerate, but chastised it with exemplary rigor.[58]

It would be incredible that a man of the enlarged mind and endowments of Nezahualcoyotl should acquiesce in the sordid superstitions of his countrymen, and still more in the sanguinary rites borrowed by them from the Aztecs. In truth, his humane temper shrunk from these cruel ceremonies, and he strenuously endeavored to recall his people to the more pure and simple worship of the ancient Toltecs. A circumstance produced a temporary change in his conduct.

He had been married some years to the wife he had so unrighteously obtained, but was not blessed with issue. The priests represented that it was owing to his neglect of the gods of his country, and that his only remedy was to propitiate them by human sacrifice. The king reluctantly consented, and the altars once more smoked with the blood of slaughtered captives. But it was all in vain; and he indignantly exclaimed, "These idols of wood and stone can neither hear nor feel; much less could they make the heavens, and the earth, and man, the lord of it. These must be the work of the all-

[58] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 46.

powerful, unknown God, Creator of the universe, on whom alone I must rely for consolation and support." [59]

He then withdrew to his rural palace of Tezcotzinco, where he remained forty days, fasting and praying at stated hours, and offering up no other sacrifice than the sweet incense of copal, and aromatic herbs and gums. At the expiration of this time, he is said to have been comforted by a vision assuring him of the success of his petition. At all events, such proved to be the fact; and this was followed by the cheering intelligence of the triumph of his arms in a quarter where he had lately experienced some humiliating reverses.[60]

Greatly strengthened in his former religious convictions, he now openly professed his faith, and was more earnest to wean his subjects from their degrading superstitions and to substitute nobler and more spiritual conceptions of the Deity. He built a temple in the usual pyramidal form, and on the summit a tower nine stories high, to represent the nine heavens; a tenth was surmounted by a roof painted black, and profusely gilded with stars, on

[59] "Verdaderamente los Dioses que io adoro, que son ídolos de piedra que no hablan, ni sienten, no pudiéron hacer ni formar la hermosura del cielo, el sol, luna, y estrellas que lo hermosean, y dan luz á la tierra, rios, aguas y fuentes, árboles, y plantas que la hermosean, las gentes que la poseen, y todo lo criado; algun Dios muy poderoso, oculto, y no conocido es el Criador de todo el universo. El solo es él que puede consolarme en mi afliccion, y socorrerme en tan grande angustia como mi corazon siente." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

[60] MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.—The manuscript here quoted is one of the many left by the author on the antiquities of his country, and forms part of a voluminous compilation made in Mexico by Father Vega, in 1792, by order of the Spanish government. See Appendix, Part 2, No. 2.

the outside, and incrusted with metals and precious stones within. He dedicated this to "*the unknown God, the Cause of causes.*" [61] It seems probable, from the emblem on the tower, as well as from the complexion of his verses, as we shall see, that he mingled with his reverence for the Supreme the astral worship which existed among the Toltecs.[62] Various musical instruments were placed on the top of the tower, and the sound of them, accompanied by the ringing of a sonorous metal struck by a mallet, summoned the worshippers to prayers, at regular seasons.[63] No image was allowed in the edifice, as unsuited to the "invisible God;" and the people were expressly prohibited from profaning the altars with blood, or any other sacrifices than that of the perfume of flowers and sweet-scented gums.

The remainder of his days was chiefly spent in his delicious solitudes of Tezcotzinco, where he devoted himself to astronomical and, probably, astrological studies, and to meditation on his immortal destiny,—giving utterance to his feelings in songs, or rather hymns, of much solemnity and pathos. An extract from one of these will convey

[61] "Al Dios no conocido, causa de las causas." MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

[62] Their earliest temples were dedicated to the sun. The moon they worshipped as his wife, and the stars as his sisters. (Veytia, Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 25.) The ruins still existing at Teotihuacan, about seven leagues from Mexico, are supposed to have been temples raised by this ancient people in honor of the two great deities. Boturini, Idea, p. 42.

[63] MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.—"This was evidently a *gong*," says Mr. Ranking, who treads with enviable confidence over the "suppositos cineres" in the path of the antiquary. See his Historical Researches on the Conquest of Peru, Mexico, etc., by the Mongols (London, 1827), p. 310.

some idea of his religious speculations. The pensive tenderness of the verses quoted in a preceding page is deepened here into a mournful, and even gloomy, coloring; while the wounded spirit, instead of seeking relief in the convivial sallies of a young and buoyant temperament, turns for consolation to the world beyond the grave:

"All things on earth have their term, and, in the most joyous career of their vanity and splendor, their strength fails, and they sink into the dust. All the round world is but a sepulchre; and there is nothing which lives on its surface that shall not be hidden and entombed beneath it. Rivers, torrents, and streams move onward to their destination. Not one flows back to its pleasant source. They rush onward, hastening to bury themselves in the deep bosom of the ocean. The things of yesterday are no more to-day; and the things of to-day shall cease, perhaps, on the morrow.[64] The cemetery is full of the loathsome dust of bodies, once quickened by living souls, who occupied thrones, presided over assemblies, marshalled armies, subdued provinces, arrogated to themselves worship, were puffed up with vainglorious pomp, and power, and empire.

"But these glories have all passed away, like the fearful smoke that issues from the throat of Popo-

[64] "Toda la redondez de la tierra es un sepulcro: no hay cosa que sustente que con título de piedad no la esconda y entierre. Corren los rios, los arroyos, las fuentes, y las aguas, y ningunas retroceden para sus alegres nacimientos: aceléranse con ansia para los vastos dominios de Tlulóca [Neptuno], y cuanto mas se arriman á sus dilatadas márgenes, tanto mas van labrando las melancólicas urnas para sepultarse. Lo que fué ayer no es hoy, ni lo de hoy se afianza que será mañana."

catepetl, with no other memorial of their existence than the record on the page of the chronicler.

"The great, the wise, the valiant, the beautiful, —alas! where are they now? They are all mingled with the clod; and that which has befallen them shall happen to us, and to those that come after us. Yet let us take courage, illustrious nobles and chieftains, true friends and loyal subjects,—*let us aspire to that heaven where all is eternal and corruption cannot come.*[65] The horrors of the tomb are but the cradle of the Sun, and the dark shadows of death are brilliant lights for the stars."[66] The mystic import of the last sentence seems to point to that superstition respecting the mansions of the Sun, which forms so beautiful a contrast to the dark features of the Aztec mythology.

At length, about the year 1470,[67] Nezahualco-

[65] "Aspiremos al cielo, que allí todo es eterno y nada se corrompe."

[66] "El horror del sepulcro es lisongera cuna para él, y las funestas sombras, brillantes luces para los astros."—The original text and a Spanish translation of this poem first appeared, I believe, in a work of Grenados y Galvez. (Tardes Americanas (México, 1778), p. 90, et seq.) The original is in the Otomi tongue, and both, together with a French version, have been inserted by M. Ternaux-Compans in the Appendix to his translation of Ixtlilxochitl's Hist. des Chichimèques (tom. i. pp. 359–367). Bustamante, who has, also, published the Spanish version in his Galería de antiguos Príncipes Mejicanos (Puebla, 1821, pp. 16, 17), calls it the "Ode of the Flower," which was recited at a banquet of the great Tezcucan nobles. If this last, however, be the same mentioned by Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 45), it must have been written in the Tezcucan tongue; and, indeed, it is not probable that the Otomi, an Indian dialect, so distinct from the languages of Anahuac, however well understood by the royal poet, could have been comprehended by a miscellaneous audience of his countrymen.

[67] An approximation to a date is the most one can hope to arrive at with Ixtlilxochitl, who has entangled his chronology in a manner beyond my skill to unravel. Thus, after telling us that Nezahualcoyotl was fifteen years old when his father was slain in 1418, he says

yotl, full of years and honors, felt himself drawing near his end. Almost half a century had elapsed since he mounted the throne of Tezcuco. He had found his kingdom dismembered by faction and bowed to the dust beneath the yoke of a foreign tyrant. He had broken that yoke; had breathed new life into the nation, renewed its ancient institutions, extended wide its domain; had seen it flourishing in all the activity of trade and agriculture, gathering strength from its enlarged resources, and daily advancing higher and higher in the great march of civilization. All this he had seen, and might fairly attribute no small portion of it to his own wise and beneficent rule. His long and glorious day was now drawing to its close; and he contemplated the event with the same serenity which he had shown under the clouds of its morning and in its meridian splendor.

A short time before his death, he gathered around him those of his children in whom he most confided, his chief counsellors, the ambassadors of Mexico and Tlacopan, and his little son, the heir to the crown, his only offspring by the queen. He was then not eight years old, but had already given, as far as so tender a blossom might, the rich promise of future excellence.[68]

After tenderly embracing the child, the dying monarch threw over him the robes of sovereignty. He then gave audience to the ambassadors, and,

he died at the age of seventy-one, in 1462. *Instar omnium.* Comp. Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 18, 19, 49.

[68] MS. de Ixtlilxochitl,—also Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 49.

when they had retired, made the boy repeat the substance of the conversation. He followed this by such counsels as were suited to his comprehension, and which, when remembered through the long vista of after-years, would serve as lights to guide him in his government of the kingdom. He besought him not to neglect the worship of "the unknown God," regretting that he himself had been unworthy to know him, and intimating his conviction that the time would come when he should be known and worshipped throughout the land.[69]

He next addressed himself to that one of his sons in whom he placed the greatest trust, and whom he had selected as the guardian of the realm. "From this hour," said he to him, "you will fill the place that I have filled, of father to this child; you will teach him to live as he ought; and by your counsels he will rule over the empire. Stand in his place, and be his guide, till he shall be of age to govern for himself." Then, turning to his other children, he admonished them to live united with one another, and to show all loyalty to their prince, who, though a child, already manifested a discretion far above his years. "Be true to him," he added, "and he will maintain you in your rights and dignities." [70]

[69] "No consentiendo que haya sacrificios de gente humana, que Dios se enoja de ello, castigando con rigor á los que lo hicieren; que el dolor que llevo es no tener luz, ni conocimiento, ni ser merecedor de conocer tan gran Dios, el qual tengo por cierto que ya que los presentes no lo conozcan, *ha de venir tiempo en que sea conocido y adorado en esta tierra.*" MS. de Ixtlilxochitl.

[70] Idem, ubi supra; also Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 49.

Feeling his end approaching, he exclaimed, "Do not bewail me with idle lamentations. But sing the song of gladness, and show a courageous spirit, that the nations I have subdued may not believe you disheartened, but may feel that each one of you is strong enough to keep them in obedience!" The undaunted spirit of the monarch shone forth even in the agonies of death. That stout heart, however, melted, as he took leave of his children and friends, weeping tenderly over them, while he bade each a last adieu. When they had withdrawn, he ordered the officers of the palace to allow no one to enter it again. Soon after, he expired, in the seventy-second year of his age, and the forty-third of his reign.[71]

Thus died the greatest monarch, and, if one foul blot could be effaced, perhaps the best, who ever sat upon an Indian throne. His character is delineated with tolerable impartiality by his kinsman, the Tezcucan chronicler: "He was wise, valiant, liberal; and, when we consider the magnanimity of his soul, the grandeur and success of his enterprises, his deep policy, as well as daring, we must admit him to have far surpassed every other prince and captain of this New World. He had few failings himself, and rigorously punished those of others. He preferred the public to his private interest; was most charitable in his nature, often buying articles, at double their worth, of poor and honest persons, and giving them away again to the sick and infirm. In seasons of scarcity he was particularly bountiful, remitting the taxes of his

[71] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 49.

vassals, and supplying their wants from the royal granaries. He put no faith in the idolatrous worship of the country. He was well instructed in moral science, and sought, above all things, to obtain light for knowing the true God. He believed in one God only, the Creator of heaven and earth, by whom we have our being, who never revealed himself to us in human form, nor in any other; with whom the souls of the virtuous are to dwell after death, while the wicked will suffer pains unspeakable. He invoked the Most High, as 'He by whom we live,' and 'Who has all things in himself.' He recognized the Sun for his father, and the Earth for his mother. He taught his children not to confide in idols, and only to conform to the outward worship of them from deference to public opinion.[72] If he could not entirely abolish human sacrifices, derived from the Aztecs, he at least restricted them to slaves and captives." [73]

I have occupied so much space with this illustrious prince that but little remains for his son and successor, Nezahualpilli. I have thought it better, in our narrow limits, to present a complete view of a single epoch, the most interesting in the Tezcucan annals, than to spread the inquiries over a broader but comparatively barren field. Yet Nezahualpilli, the heir to the crown, was a remarkable person, and his reign contains many inci-

[72] "Solia amonestar á sus hijos en secreto que no adorasen á aquellas figuras de ídolos, y que aquello que hiciesen en público fuese *solo por cumplimiento.*" Ixtlilxochitl.

[73] Idem, ubi supra.

dents which I regret to be obliged to pass over in silence.[74]

He had, in many respects, a taste similar to his father's, and, like him, displayed a profuse magnificence in his way of living and in his public edifices. He was more severe in his morals, and, in the execution of justice, stern even to the sacrifice of natural affection. Several remarkable instances of this are told; one, among others, in relation to his eldest son, the heir to the crown, a prince of great promise. The young man entered into a poetical correspondence with one of his father's concubines, the lady of Tula, as she was called, a woman of humble origin, but of uncommon endowments. She wrote verses with ease, and could discuss graver matters with the king and his ministers. She maintained a separate establishment, where she lived in state, and acquired, by her beauty and accomplishments, great ascendency over her royal lover.[75] With this favorite the prince carried on a

[74] The name *Nezahualpilli* signifies "the prince for whom one has fasted,"—in allusion, no doubt, to the long fast of his father previous to his birth. (See Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 45.) I have explained the meaning of the equally euphonious name of his parent, Nezahualcoyotl. (*Ante,* ch. 4.) If it be true that

"Cæsar or Epaminondas
Could ne'er without names have been known to us,"

it is no less certain that such names as those of the two Tezcucan princes, so difficult to be pronounced or remembered by a European, are most unfavorable to immortality.

[75] "De las concubinas la que mas privó con el rey fué la que llamaban la Señora de Tula, no por linage, sino porque era hija de un mercader, y era tan sabia que competia con el rey y con los mas sabios de su reyno, y era en la poesía muy aventajada, que con estas gracias y dones naturales tenia al rey muy sugeto á su voluntad de tal manera que lo que quería alcanzaba de él, y así vivia sola por si con grande aparato y magestad en unos palacios que el rey le mandó edificar." Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 57.

correspondence in verse,—whether of an amorous nature does not appear. At all events, the offence was capital. It was submitted to the regular tribunal, who pronounced sentence of death on the unfortunate youth; and the king, steeling his heart against all entreaties and the voice of nature, suffered the cruel judgment to be carried into execution. We might, in this case, suspect the influence of baser passions on his mind, but it was not a solitary instance of his inexorable justice towards those most near to him. He had the stern virtue of an ancient Roman, destitute of the softer graces which make virtue attractive. When the sentence was carried into effect, he shut himself up in his palace for many weeks, and commanded the doors and windows of his son's residence to be walled up, that it might never again be occupied.[76]

Nezahualpilli resembled his father in his passion for astronomical studies, and is said to have had an observatory on one of his palaces.[77] He was devoted to war in his youth, but, as he advanced in years, resigned himself to a more indolent way of

[76] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 67.—The Tezcucan historian records several appalling examples of this severity,—one in particular, in relation to his guilty wife. The story, reminding one of the tales of an Oriental harem, has been translated for the Appendix, Part 2, No. 4. See also Torquemada (Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 66), and Zurita (Rapport, pp. 108, 109). He was the terror, in particular, of all unjust magistrates. They had little favor to expect from the man who could stifle the voice of nature in his own bosom in obedience to the laws. As Suetonius said of a prince who had not his virtue, "Vehemens et in coercendis quidem delictis immodicus." Vita Galbæ, sec. 9.

[77] Torquemada saw the remains of this, *or what passed for such,* in his day. Monarch. Ind., lib. 2, cap. 64.

life, and sought his chief amusement in the pursuit of his favorite science, or in the soft pleasures of the sequestered gardens of Tezcotzinco. This quiet life was ill suited to the turbulent temper of the times, and of his Mexican rival, Montezuma. The distant provinces fell off from their allegiance; the army relaxed its discipline; disaffection crept into its ranks; and the wily Montezuma, partly by violence, and partly by stratagems unworthy of a king, succeeded in plundering his brother monarch of some of his most valuable domains. Then it was that he arrogated to himself the title and supremacy of emperor, hitherto borne by the Tezcucan princes as head of the alliance. Such is the account given by the historians of that nation, who in this way explain the acknowledged superiority of the Aztec sovereign, both in territory and consideration, on the landing of the Spaniards.[78]

These misfortunes pressed heavily on the spirits of Nezahualpilli. Their effect was increased by certain gloomy prognostics of a near calamity which was to overwhelm the country.[79] He withdrew to his retreat, to brood in secret over his sorrows. His health rapidly declined; and in the year 1515, at the age of fifty-two, he sank into the

[78] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 73, 74.—This sudden transfer of empire from the Tezcucans, at the close of the reigns of two of their ablest monarchs, is so improbable that one cannot but doubt if they ever possessed it,—at least to the extent claimed by the patriotic historian. See *ante,* chap. 1, note 25, and the corresponding text.

[79] Ibid., cap. 72.—The reader will find a particular account of these prodigies, better authenticated than most miracles, in a future page of this history.

grave;[80] happy, at least, that by this timely death he escaped witnessing the fulfilment of his own predictions, in the ruin of his country, and the extinction of the Indian dynasties forever.[81]

In reviewing the brief sketch here presented of the Tezcucan monarchy, we are strongly impressed with the conviction of its superiority, in all the great features of civilization, over the rest of Anahuac. The Mexicans showed a similar proficiency, no doubt, in the mechanic arts, and even in mathematical science. But in the science of government, in legislation, in speculative doctrines of a religious nature, in the more elegant pursuits of poetry, eloquence, and whatever depended on refinement of taste and a polished idiom, they confessed themselves inferior, by resorting to their rivals for instruction and citing their works as the masterpieces of their tongue. The best histories, the best poems, the best code of laws, the purest dialect, were all allowed to be Tezcucan. The Aztecs rivalled their neighbors in splendor of living, and even in the magnificence of their structures. They displayed a pomp and ostentatious pageantry truly Asiatic. But this was the development of the material rather than the intellectual principle. They

[80] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 75.—Or, rather, at the age of fifty, if the historian is right in placing his birth, as he does in a preceding chapter, in 1465. (See cap. 46.) It is not easy to decide what is true, when the writer does not take the trouble to be true to himself.

[81] His obsequies were celebrated with sanguinary pomp. Two hundred male and one hundred female slaves were sacrificed at his tomb. His body was consumed, amidst a heap of jewels, precious stuffs, and incense, on a funeral pile; and the ashes, deposited in a golden urn, were placed in the great temple of Huitzilopochtli, for whose worship the king, notwithstanding the lessons of his father, had some partiality. Ixtlilxochitl.

wanted the refinement of manners essential to a continued advance in civilization. An insurmountable limit was put to theirs by that bloody mythology which threw its withering taint over the very air that they breathed.

The superiority of the Tezcucans was owing, doubtless, in a great measure to that of the two sovereigns whose reigns we have been depicting. There is no position which affords such scope for ameliorating the condition of man as that occupied by an absolute ruler over a nation imperfectly civilized. From his elevated place, commanding all the resources of his age, it is in his power to diffuse them far and wide among his people. He may be the copious reservoir on the mountain-top, drinking in the dews of heaven, to send them in fertilizing streams along the lower slopes and valleys, clothing even the wilderness in beauty. Such were Nezahualcoyotl and his illustrious successor, whose enlightened policy, extending through nearly a century, wrought a most salutary revolution in the condition of their country. It is remarkable that we, the inhabitants of the same continent, should be more familiar with the history of many a barbarian chief, both in the Old and New World, than with that of these truly great men, whose names are identified with the most glorious period in the annals of the Indian races.

What was the actual amount of the Tezcucan civilization it is not easy to determine, with the imperfect light afforded us. It was certainly far below anything which the word conveys, measured by a European standard. In some of the arts, and

in any walk of science, they could only have made, as it were, a beginning. But they had begun in the right way, and already showed a refinement in sentiment and manners, a capacity for receiving instruction, which, under good auspices, might have led them on to indefinite improvement. Unhappily, they were fast falling under the dominion of the warlike Aztecs. And that people repaid the benefits received from their more polished neighbors by imparting to them their own ferocious superstition, which, falling like a mildew on the land, would soon have blighted its rich blossoms of promise and turned even its fruits to dust and ashes.

Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, who flourished in the beginning of the sixteenth century,* was a native of Tezcuco, and descended in a direct line from the sovereigns of that kingdom. The royal posterity became so numerous in a few generations that it was common to see them reduced to great poverty and earning a painful subsistence by the most humble occupations. Ixtlilxochitl, who was descended from the principal wife or queen of Nezahualpilli, maintained a very respectable position. He filled the office of interpreter to the viceroy, to which he was recommended by his acquaintance with the ancient hieroglyphics and his knowledge of the Mexican and Spanish languages. His birth gave him access to persons of the highest rank in his own nation, some of whom occupied important civil posts under the new government, and were thus enabled to make large collections of Indian manuscripts, which were liberally opened to him. He had an extensive library of his own, also, and with these means diligently pursued the study of the Tezcucan antiquities. He deciphered the hieroglyphics, made himself master of the songs and traditions, and fortified his narrative by the oral testimony of some very aged persons, who had themselves been acquainted with the Conquerors. From such authentic sources he composed various works in the Castilian, on the primitive history of the Toltec and the

* [Ixtlilxochitl (born about 1568) wrote in the early part of the seventeenth century. A certificate which he presented to the viceroy bears the date of November 18, 1608. The error is apparently a clerical one; though a previous passage in the text seems to indicate some confusion on the author's part.]

Tezcucan races, continuing it down to the subversion of the empire by Cortés. These various accounts, compiled under the title of *Relaciones,* are, more or less, repetitions and abridgments of each other; nor is it easy to understand why they were thus composed. The *Historia Chichimeca* is the best digested and most complete of the whole series, and as such has been the most frequently consulted for the preceding pages.

Ixtlilxochitl's writings have many of the defects belonging to his age. He often crowds the page with incidents of a trivial, and sometimes improbable, character. The improbability increases with the distance of the period; for distance, which diminishes objects to the natural eye, exaggerates them to the mental. His chronology, as I have more than once noticed, is inextricably entangled. He has often lent a too willing ear to traditions and reports which would startle the more skeptical criticism of the present time. Yet there is an appearance of good faith and simplicity in his writings, which may convince the reader that when he errs it is from no worse cause than national partiality. And surely such partiality is excusable in the descendant of a proud line, shorn of its ancient splendors, which it was soothing to his own feelings to revive again—though with something more than their legitimate lustre—on the canvas of history. It should also be considered that, if his narrative is sometimes startling, his researches penetrate into the mysterious depths of antiquity, where light and darkness meet and melt into each other, and where everything is still further liable to distortion, as seen through the misty medium of hieroglyphics.*

With these allowances, it will be found that the Tezcucan historian has just claims to our admiration for the compass of his inquiries and the sagacity with which they have been conducted. He has introduced us to the knowledge of the most polished people of Anahuac, whose records, if preserved, could not, at a much later period, have been comprehended; and he has thus afforded a standard of comparison which much raises our ideas of American civilization. His language is simple, and, occasionally, eloquent and touching. His descriptions are highly picturesque. He abounds in familiar anecdote; and the natural graces of his manner, in detailing the more striking events of history and the personal adventures of his heroes, entitle him to the name of the Livy of Anahuac.

I shall be obliged to enter hereafter into his literary merits, in connection with the narrative of the Conquest; for which he is a prominent authority. His earlier annals—though no one of his manuscripts has been printed—have been diligently studied by the Spanish

* [Señor Ramirez objects to this remark, on the ground that, however obscure the hieroglyphics may now seem, at the time of Ixtlilxochitl they were, in his language, "as plain as our letters to those who were acquainted with them." Notas y Esclarecimientos, p. 10.—K.]

writers in Mexico, and liberally transferred to their pages; and his reputation, like Sahagun's, has doubtless suffered by the process. His *Historia Chichimeca* is now turned into French by M. Ternaux-Compans, forming part of that inestimable series of translations from unpublished documents which have so much enlarged our acquaintance with the early American history. I have had ample opportunity of proving the merits of his version of Ixtlilxochitl, and am happy to bear my testimony to the fidelity and elegance with which it is executed.

Note.—In a note which has heretofore appeared at the end of this first book Mr. Prescott states that it had been his intention to conclude the introductory portion of the work with an inquiry into the origin of the Mexican civilization. But because he agreed with Humboldt, that "the general question of the origin of the inhabitants of a continent is beyond the limits prescribed to history," and with Livy, that "for the majority of readers the origin and remote antiquities of a nation can have comparatively little interest," he had decided, on further consideration, to throw his observations on this topic into the Appendix. A man of extraordinary modesty, he feared lest the reader should become so wearied with his presentation of the story of the earlier civilization, in the first book, that he would not have energy enough left for the proper consideration of the tale of the Conquest, set forth with such conscientious care in the succeeding chapters. The essay has now been taken from the Appendix and placed in its proper position.—M.

THE ORIGIN OF THE MEXICAN CIVILIZATION

PRELIMINARY NOTICE

THE following Essay was originally designed to close the Introductory Book, to which it properly belongs. It was written three years since, at the same time with that part of the work. I know of no work of importance, having reference to the general subject of discussion, which has appeared since that period, except Mr. Bradford's valuable treatise on *American Antiquities*. But in respect to that part of the discussion which treats of American Architecture a most important contribution has been made by Mr. Stephens's two works, containing the account of his visits to Central America and Yucatan, and especially by the last of these publications. Indeed, the ground, before so imperfectly known, has now been so diligently explored that we have all the light which we can reasonably expect to aid us in making up our opinion in regard to the mysterious monuments of Yucatan. It only remains that the exquisite illustrations of Mr. Catherwood should be published on a larger scale, like the great works on the subject in France and England, in order to exhibit

to the eye a more adequate representation of these magnificent ruins than can be given in the limited compass of an octavo page.

But, notwithstanding the importance of Mr. Stephens's researches, I have not availed myself of them to make any additions to the original draft of this Essay, nor have I rested my conclusions in any instance on his authority. These conclusions had been formed from a careful study of the narratives of Dupaix and Waldeck, together with that of their splendid illustrations of the remains of Palenque and Uxmal, two of the principal places explored by Mr. Stephens; and the additional facts collected by him from the vast field which he has surveyed, so far from shaking my previous deductions, have only served to confirm them. The only object of my own speculations on these remains was to ascertain their probable origin, or rather to see what light, if any, they could throw on the origin of Aztec Civilization. The reader, on comparing my reflections with those of Mr. Stephens in the closing chapters of his two works, will see that I have arrived at inferences, as to the origin and probable antiquity of these structures, precisely the same as his. Conclusions formed under such different circumstances serve to corroborate each other; and, although the reader will find here some things which would have been different had I been guided by the light now thrown on the path, yet I prefer not to disturb the foundations on which the argument stands, nor to impair its value —if it has any—as a distinct and independent testimony.

ORIGIN OF THE MEXICAN CIVILIZATION—ANALOGIES WITH THE OLD WORLD

When the Europeans first touched the shores of America, it was as if they had alighted on another planet,—every thing there was so different from what they had before seen. They were introduced to new varieties of plants, and to unknown races of animals; while man, the lord of all, was equally strange, in complexion, language, and institutions.[1] It was what they emphatically styled it,—a New World. Taught by their faith to derive all created beings from one source, they felt a natural perplexity as to the manner in which these distant and insulated regions could have obtained their inhabitants. The same curiosity was felt by their countrymen at home, and the European scholars bewildered their brains with speculations on the best way of solving this interesting problem.

In accounting for the presence of animals there, some imagined that the two hemispheres might once have been joined in the extreme north, so as to have afforded an easy communication.[2] Others, embarrassed by the difficulty of transporting inhabitants of the tropics across the Arctic regions,

[1] The names of many animals in the New World, indeed, have been frequently borrowed from the Old; but the species are very different. "When the Spaniards landed in America," says an eminent naturalist, "they did not find a single animal they were acquainted with; not one of the quadrupeds of Europe, Asia, or Africa." Lawrence, Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man (London, 1819), p. 250.

[2] Acosta, lib. I, cap. 16.

revived the old story of Plato's Atlantis, that huge island, now submerged, which might have stretched from the shores of Africa to the eastern borders of the new continent; * while they saw vestiges of a similar convulsion of nature in the green islands

* [The existence at some former period of such an island, or rather continent, seems to be regarded by geologists as a well-attested fact. But few would admit that its subsidence can have taken place through any sudden convulsion or within the period of human existence. Such, however, is the theory maintained by M. Brasseur de Bourbourg, who dates the event "six or seven thousand years ago," and believes that the traditions of it have been faithfully preserved. This is the great cataclysm with which all mythology begins. It may be traced through the myths of Greece, Egypt, India, and America, all being identical and having a common origin. It is the subject of the *Teo-Amoxtli,* of which several of the Mexican manuscripts, the Borgian and Dresden Codices in particular, are the hieroglyphical transcriptions, and of which "the actual letter," "in the Nahuatlac language," is found in a manuscript in Boturini's Collection. This manuscript is "in appearance" a history of the Toltecs and of the kings of Colhuacan and Mexico; but "under the ciphers of a fastidious chronology, under the recital more or less animated of the Toltec history, are concealed the profoundest mysteries concerning the geological origin of the world in its existing form and the cradle of the religions of antiquity." The Toltecs are "telluric powers, agents of the subterranean fire;" they are identical with the Cabiri, who reappear as the Cyclops, having "hollowed an eye in their forehead; that is to say, raised themselves with masses of earth above the surface and filled the craters of the volcanoes with fire." "The Chichimecs and the Aztecs are also symbolical names, borrowed from the forces of nature." Tollan, "the marshy or reedy place," was "the low, fertile region" now covered by the Gulf of Mexico. Quetzalcoatl is "merely the personification of the land swallowed up by the ocean." Tlapallan, Aztlan, and other names are similarly explained. Osiris, Pan, Hercules, and Bacchus have their respective parts assigned to them; for "not only all the sources of ancient mythology, but even the most mysterious details, even the obscurest enigmas, with which that mythology is enveloped, are to be sought in the two mediterraneans hollowed out by the cataclysm, and in the islands, great and small, which separate them from the ocean." (Quatre Lettres sur le Mexique.) There can be no refutation of such a theory, or of the assumptions on which it rests; but it may be proper to remark that its author has not succeeded in deciphering a single hieroglyphical character, and has published no translation of the real or supposed *Teo-Amoxtli,*—a point on which some misapprehension seems to exist.—K.]

sprinkled over the Pacific, once the mountain summits of a vast continent, now buried beneath the waters.[3] Some, distrusting the existence of revolutions of which no record was preserved, supposed that animals might have found their way across the ocean by various means; the birds of stronger wing by flight over the narrowest spaces; while the tamer kinds of quadrupeds might easily have been transported by men in boats, and even the more ferocious, as tigers, bears, and the like, have been brought over, in the same manner, when young, "for amusement and the pleasure of the chase"![4] Others, again, maintained the equally probable opinion that angels, who had, doubtless, taken charge of them in the ark, had also superintended their distribution afterwards over the different parts of the globe.[5] Such were the extremities to which even thinking minds were reduced, in their eagerness to reconcile the literal interpretation of Scripture with the phenomena of nature! The philosophy of a later day conceives that it is no departure from this sacred authority to follow the suggestions of science, by referring the new tribes of animals to a creation, since the deluge, in those places for which they were clearly intended by constitution and habits.[6]

[3] Count Carli shows much ingenuity and learning in support of the famous Egyptian tradition, recorded by Plato in his "Timæus,"—of the good faith of which the Italian philosopher nothing doubts. Lettres Américc., tom. ii. let. 36–39.

[4] Garcia, Orígen de los Indios de el nuevo Mundo (Madrid, 1729), cap. 4.

[5] Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 1, cap. 8.

[6] Prichard, Researches into the Physical History of Mankind (London, 1826), vol. i. p. 81, et seq.—He may find an orthodox authority of respectable antiquity, for a similar hypothesis, in St. Au-

Man would not seem to present the same embarrassments, in the discussion, as the inferior orders. He is fitted by nature for every climate, the burning sun of the tropics and the icy atmosphere of the North. He wanders indifferently over the sands of the desert, the waste of polar snows, and the pathless ocean. Neither mountains nor seas intimidate him, and, by the aid of mechanical contrivances, he accomplishes journeys which birds of boldest wing would perish in attempting. Without ascending to the high northern latitudes, where the continents of Asia and America approach within fifty miles of each other, it would be easy for the inhabitant of Eastern Tartary or Japan to steer his canoe from islet to islet, quite across to the American shore, without ever being on the ocean more than two days at a time.[7] The communication is somewhat more difficult on the Atlantic side. But even there, Iceland was occupied by colonies of Europeans many hundred years before the discovery by Columbus; and the transit from Iceland to America is comparatively easy.[8] Independently of these channels, others were opened in the Southern hemisphere, by means of

gustine, who plainly intimates his belief that, "as by God's command, at the time of the creation, the earth brought forth the living creature after his kind, so a similar process must have taken place after the deluge, in islands too remote to be reached by animals from the continent." De Civitate Dei, ap. Opera (Parisiis, 1636), tom. v. p. 987.

[7] Beechey, Voyage to the Pacific and Beering's Strait (London, 1831), Part 2, Appendix.—Humboldt, Examen critique de l'Histoire de la Géographie du Nouveau-Continent (Paris, 1837), tom. ii. p. 58.

[8] Whatever skepticism may have been entertained as to the visit of the Northmen, in the eleventh century, to the coasts of the great continent, it is probably set at rest in the minds of most scholars since

the numerous islands in the Pacific. The population of America is not nearly so difficult a problem as that of these little spots. But experience shows how practicable the communication may have been, even with such sequestered places.[9] The savage has been picked up in his canoe, after drifting hundreds of leagues on the open ocean, and sustaining life, for months, by the rain from heaven, and such fish as he could catch.[10] The instances are not very rare; and it would be strange if these wandering barks should not sometimes have been intercepted by the great continent which stretches across the globe, in unbroken continuity, almost from pole to pole. No doubt, history could reveal to us more than one example of men who, thus driven upon the American shores, have mingled their blood with that of the primitive races who occupied them.

the publication of the original documents by the Royal Society at Copenhagen. (See, in particular, Antiquitates Americanæ (Hafniæ, 1837), pp. 79–200.) How far south they penetrated is not so easily settled.

[9] The most remarkable example, probably, of a direct intercourse between remote points is furnished us by Captain Cook, who found the inhabitants of New Zealand not only with the same religion, but speaking the same language, as the people of Otaheite, distant more than 2000 miles. The comparison of the two vocabularies establishes the fact. Cook's Voyages (Dublin, 1784), vol. i. book 1, chap. 8.

[10] The eloquent Lyell closes an enumeration of some extraordinary and well-attested instances of this kind with remarking, "Were the whole of mankind now cut off, with the exception of one family, inhabiting the old or new continent, or Australia, or even some coral islet of the Pacific, we should expect their descendants, though they should never become more enlightened than the South Sea Islanders or the Esquimaux, to spread, in the course of ages, over the whole earth, diffused partly by the tendency of population to increase beyond the means of subsistence in a limited district, and partly by the accidental drifting of canoes by tides and currents to distant shores." Principles of Geology (London, 1832), vol. ii. p. 121.

The real difficulty is not, as with the animals, to explain how man could have reached America, but from what quarter he actually has reached it. In surveying the whole extent of the New World, it was found to contain two great families, one in the lowest stage of civilization, composed of hunters, and another nearly as far advanced in refinement as the semi-civilized empires of Asia. The more polished races were probably unacquainted with the existence of each other on the different continents of America, and had as little intercourse with the barbarian tribes by whom they were surrounded. Yet they had some things in common both with these last and with one another, which remarkably distinguished them from the inhabitants of the Old World. They had a common complexion and physical organization,—at least, bearing a more uniform character than is found among the nations of any other quarter of the globe. They had some usages and institutions in common, and spoke languages of similar construction, curiously distinguished from those in the Eastern hemisphere.

Whence did the refinement of these more polished races come? Was it only a higher development of the same Indian character which we see, in the more northern latitudes, defying every attempt at permanent civilization? Was it engrafted on a race of higher order in the scale originally, but self-instructed, working its way upward by its own powers? Was it, in short, an indigenous civilization? or was it borrowed in some degree from the nations in the Eastern World?

If indigenous, how are we to explain the singular coincidence with the East in institutions and opinions? If Oriental, how shall we account for the great dissimilarity in language, and for the ignorance of some of the most simple and useful arts, which, once known, it would seem scarcely possible should have been forgotten? This is the riddle of the Sphinx, which no Œdipus has yet had the ingenuity to solve. It is, however, a question of deep interest to every curious and intelligent observer of his species. And it has accordingly occupied the thoughts of men, from the first discovery of the country to the present time; when the extraordinary monuments brought to light in Central America have given a new impulse to inquiry, by suggesting the probability—the possibility, rather—that surer evidences than any hitherto known might be afforded for establishing the fact of a positive communication with the other hemisphere.

It is not my intention to add many pages to the volumes already written on this inexhaustible topic. The subject—as remarked by a writer of a philosophical mind himself, and who has done more than any other for the solution of the mystery—is of too speculative a nature for history, almost for philosophy.[11] But this work would be incomplete without affording the reader the means of judging for himself as to the true sources of the peculiar civili-

[11] "La question générale de la première origine des habitans d'un continent est au-delà des limites prescrites à l'histoire; peut-être même n'est-elle pas une question philosophique." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. p. 349.

zation already described, by exhibiting to him the alleged points of resemblance with the ancient continent. In doing this, I shall confine myself to my proper subject, the Mexicans, or to what, in some way or other, may have a bearing on this subject; proposing to state only real points of resemblance, as they are supported by evidence, and stripped, as far as possible, of the illusions with which they have been invested by the pious credulity of one party, and the visionary system-building of another.

An obvious analogy is found in *cosmogonal traditions* and *religious usages*. The reader has already been made acquainted with the Aztec system of four great cycles, at the end of each of which the world was destroyed, to be again regenerated.[12] The belief in these periodical convulsions of nature, through the agency of some one or other of the elements, was familiar to many countries in the Eastern hemisphere; and, though varying in detail, the general resemblance of outline furnishes an argument in favor of a common origin.[13]

No tradition has been more widely spread among nations than that of a Deluge. Independently of tradition, indeed, it would seem to be naturally suggested by the interior structure of the earth,

[12] *Ante*, p. 75.

[13] The fanciful division of time into four or five cycles or ages was found among the Hindoos (Asiatic Researches, vol. ii. mem. 7), the Thibetians (Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 210), the Persians (Bailly, Traité de l'Astronomie (Paris, 1787), tom. i. discours préliminaire), the Greeks (Hesiod, Ἔργα καὶ Ἡμέραι, v. 108, et seq.), and other people, doubtless. The five ages in the Grecian cosmogony had reference to moral rather than physical phenomena,—a proof of higher civilization.

and by the elevated places on which marine substances are found to be deposited. It was the received notion, under some form or other, of the most civilized people in the Old World, and of the barbarians of the New.[14] The Aztecs combined with this some particular circumstances of a more arbitrary character, resembling the accounts of the East. They believed that two persons survived the Deluge,—a man, named Coxcox, and his wife. Their heads are represented in ancient paintings, together with a boat floating on the waters, at the foot of a mountain. A dove is also depicted, with the hieroglyphical emblem of languages in his mouth, which he is distributing to the children of Coxcox, who were born dumb.[15] The neighboring people of Michoacán, inhabiting the same high plains of the Andes, had a still further tradition, that the boat in which Tezpi, their Noah, escaped,

[14] The Chaldean and Hebrew accounts of the Deluge are nearly the same. The parallel is pursued in Palfrey's ingenious Lectures on the Jewish Scriptures and Antiquities (Boston, 1840), vol. ii. lect. 21, 22. Among the pagan writers, none approach so near to the Scripture narrative as Lucian, who, in his account of the Greek traditions, speaks of the ark, and the pairs of different kinds of animals. (De Deâ Syriâ, sec. 12.) The same thing is found in the Bhagawatn Purana, a Hindoo poem of great antiquity. (Asiatic Researches, vol. ii. mem. 7.) The simple tradition of a universal inundation was preserved among most of the aborigines, probably, of the Western World. See McCulloh, Researches, p. 147.

[15] This tradition of the Aztecs is recorded in an ancient hieroglyphical map, first published in Gemelli Carreri's Giro del Mondo. (See tom. vi. p. 38, ed. Napoli, 1700.) Its authenticity, as well as the integrity of Carreri himself, on which some suspicions have been thrown (see Robertson's America (London, 1796), vol. iii. note 26), has been successfully vindicated by Boturini, Clavigero, and Humboldt, all of whom trod in the steps of the Italian traveller. (Boturini, Idea, p. 54.—Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, pp. 223, 224.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 24.) The map is a copy from one in the curious collection of Siguenza. It has all the character

was filled with various kinds of animals and birds. After some time, a vulture was sent out from it, but remained feeding on the dead bodies of the giants, which had been left on the earth, as the waters subsided. The little humming-bird, *huitzitzilin,* was then sent forth, and returned with a twig in its mouth. The coincidence of both these accounts with the Hebrew and Chaldean narratives is obvious. It were to be wished that the authority for the Michoacán version were more satisfactory.[16]

On the way between Vera Cruz and the capital, not far from the modern city of Puebla, stands the venerable relic—with which the reader will become familiar in the course of the narrative—called the temple of Cholula. It is a pyramidal mound, built, or rather cased, with unburnt brick, rising to the height of nearly one hundred and eighty feet. The popular tradition of the natives is that it was erected by a family of giants, who had escaped the great inundation and designed

of a genuine Aztec picture, with the appearance of being retouched, especially in the costumes, by some later artist. The painting of the four ages, in the Vatican Codex, No. 3730, represents, also, the two figures in the boat, escaping the great cataclysm. Antiq. of Mexico, vol. i. Pl. 7.

[16] I have met with no other voucher for this remarkable tradition than Clavigero (Stor. del Messico, dissert. 1), a good, though certainly not the best, authority, when he gives us no reason for our faith. Humboldt, however, does not distrust the tradition. (See Vues des Cordillères, p. 226.) He is not so skeptical as Vater; who, in allusion to the stories of the Flood, remarks, "I have purposely omitted noticing the resemblance of religious notions, for I do not see how it is possible to separate from such views every influence of Christian ideas, if it be only from an imperceptible confusion in the mind of the narrator." Mithridates, oder allgemeine Sprachenkunde (Berlin, 1812), Theil iii. Abtheil. 3, p. 82, note.

to raise the building to the clouds; but the gods, offended with their presumption, sent fires from heaven on the pyramid, and compelled them to abandon the attempt.[17] The partial coincidence of this legend with the Hebrew account of the tower of Babel, received also by other nations of the East, cannot be denied.[18] But one who has not examined the subject will scarcely credit what bold hypotheses have been reared on this slender basis.

Another point of coincidence is found in the

[17] This story, so irreconcilable with the vulgar Aztec tradition, which admits only two survivors of the Deluge, was still lingering among the natives of the place on M. de Humboldt's visit there. (Vues des Cordillères, pp. 31, 32.) It agrees with that given by the interpreter of the Vatican Codex (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 192, et seq.); a writer—probably a monk of the sixteenth century—in whom ignorance and dogmatism contend for mastery. See a precious specimen of both, in his account of the Aztec chronology, in the very pages above referred to.

[18] A tradition, very similar to the Hebrew one, existed among the Chaldeans and the Hindoos. (Asiatic Researches, vol. iii. mem. 16.) The natives of Chiapa, also, according to the bishop Nuñez de la Vega, had a story, cited as genuine by Humboldt (Vues des Cordillères, p. 148), which not only agrees with the Scripture account of the manner in which Babel was built, but with that of the subsequent dispersion and the confusion of tongues. A very marvellous coincidence! But who shall vouch for the authenticity of the tradition? The bishop flourished towards the close of the seventeenth century. He drew his information from hieroglyphical maps, and an Indian MS., which Boturini in vain endeavored to recover. In exploring these, he borrowed the aid of the natives, who, as Boturini informs us, frequently led the good man into errors and absurdities; of which he gives several specimens. (Idea, p. 116, et seq.)—Boturini himself has fallen into an error equally great, in regard to a map of this same Cholulan pyramid, which Clavigero shows, far from being a genuine antique, was the forgery of a later day. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 130, nota.) It is impossible to get a firm footing in the quicksands of tradition. The further we are removed from the Conquest, the more difficult it becomes to decide what belongs to the primitive Aztec and what to the Christian convert.

goddess Cioacoatl, "our lady and mother;" "the first goddess who brought forth;" "who bequeathed the sufferings of childbirth to women, as the tribute of death;" "by whom sin came into the world." Such was the remarkable language applied by the Aztecs to this venerated deity. She was usually represented with a serpent near her; and her name signified the "serpent-woman." In all this we see much to remind us of the mother of the human family, the Eve of the Hebrew and Syrian nations.[19]

But none of the deities of the country suggested such astonishing analogies with Scripture as Quetzalcoatl, with whom the reader has already been made acquainted.[20] He was the white man, wearing a long beard, who came from the East, and who, after presiding over the golden age of Anahuac, disappeared as mysteriously as he had come, on the great Atlantic Ocean. As he promised to return at some future day, his reappearance was looked for with confidence by each succeeding gen-

[19] Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 1, cap. 6; lib. 6, cap. 28, 33.—Torquemada, not content with the honest record of his predecessor, whose MS. lay before him, tells us that the Mexican Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. (Monarch, Ind., lib. 6, cap. 31.) The ancient interpreters of the Vatican and Tellerian Codices add the further tradition of her bringing sin and sorrow into the world by plucking the forbidden *rose* (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi., explan. of Pl. 7, 20); and Veytia remembers to have seen a Toltec or Aztec map representing a garden with a single tree in it, round which was coiled the serpent with a human face! (Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 1.) After this we may be prepared for Lord Kingsborough's deliberate conviction that the "Aztecs had a clear knowledge of the Old Testament, and, most probably, of the New, though somewhat corrupted by time and hieroglyphics"! Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 409.

[20] *Ante,* pp. 71–73.

eration. There is little in these circumstances to remind one of Christianity. But the curious antiquaries of Mexico found out that to this god were to be referred the institution of ecclesiastical communities, reminding one of the monastic societies of the Old World; that of the rites of confession and penance; and the knowledge even of the great doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation![21] One party, with pious industry, accumulated proofs to establish his identity with the Apostle St. Thomas;[22] * while another, with less scrupulous faith, saw, in his anticipated advent to regenerate the nation, the type, dimly veiled, of the Messiah![23]

Yet we should have charity for the missionaries who first landed in this world of wonders, where,

[21] Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 15.

[22] Ibid., lib. 1, cap. 19.—A sorry argument, even for a casuist. See, also, the elaborate dissertation of Dr. Mier (apud Sahagun, lib. 3, Suplem.), which settles the question entirely to the satisfaction of his reporter, Bustamante.†

[23] See, among others, Lord Kingsborough's reading of the Borgian Codex, and the interpreters of the Vatican (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi., explan. of Pl. 3, 10, 41), equally well skilled with his lordship—and Sir Hudibras—in unravelling mysteries

> "Whose primitive tradition reaches
> As far as Adam's first green breeches."

* [See note, *ante*, p. 73.]

† [P. De Roo, in his History of America before Columbus (Philadelphia, 1900), has set forth with great learning the St. Thomas legend. Of the writers upon the subject he says, "They all establish their opinion upon identical foundations,—to wit, upon the authority of ancient and revered writers, who may have had a knowledge of America's existence and of its religious condition from human sources, yet especially drew their conclusions from the statements of Holy Writ; and again, upon the vestiges and traditions of the New World that are adduced as evidences of St. Thomas's mission in our hemisphere.—M.]

while man and nature wore so strange an aspect, they were astonished by occasional glimpses of rites and ceremonies which reminded them of a purer faith. In their amazement, they did not reflect whether these things were not the natural expression of the religious feeling common to all nations who have reached even a moderate civilization. They did not inquire whether the same things were not practised by other idolatrous people. They could not suppress their wonder, as they beheld the Cross,* the sacred emblem of their own faith, raised as an object of worship in the temples of Anahuac. They met with it in various places; and the image of a cross may be seen at this day, sculptured in bas-relief, on the walls of

* [The Cross symbol has been the subject of endless controversy. As usual, we find that Bancroft has given the subject careful consideration. (Native Races, iii.) Brinton (Myths of the New World, pp. 95, 96) quotes authorities to demonstrate in it the four cardinal points, the rain-bringers, the symbol of life and health. He was the first writer to connect the Palenque cross with the four cardinal points. Charles Rau (Palenque Tablet in U. S. National Museum, in No. 331 Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge) concludes that it is a Phallic symbol. Bandelier thinks it was the emblem of fire. Squier calls it the tree of life of the Mexicans. Payne (America, ii. p. 86) thinks it was a representation of a human sacrifice to the sun. The "cross" is simply the conventional representation of a tree. At Palenque the bird which surmounts the tree is a turkey. The celebrant, decorated with a necklace, makes an offering to the winged deity. The living fetish was called Quetzalhuexolotl, and the tree was called "the tree of the plumed turkey." The sacrifice presented is a diminutive human figure. The monstrous head which the roots of the tree surround is human, but with serpentine details. It represents the "Female Serpent," the earth goddess to whom the tree owes its growth and nutrition.

Father De Roo (America before Columbus, vol. i. ch. xvii, pp. 423–455) concludes that "Christ and his cross were known in ancient America." In his subsequent chapters he describes remains of Christian ceremonies, baptism, confirmation, a eucharist, confession, penance, etc.—M.]

one of the buildings of Palenque, while a figure bearing some resemblance to that of a child is held up to it, as if in adoration.[24]

Their surprise was heightened when they witnessed a religious rite which reminded them of the Christian communion. On these occasions an image of the tutelary deity of the Aztecs was made of the flour of maize, mixed with blood, and, after consecration by the priests, was distributed among the people, who, as they ate it, "showed signs of humiliation and sorrow, declaring it was the flesh of the deity!"[25] How could the Roman Catholic fail to recognize the awful ceremony of the Eucharist?

[24] Antiquités Mexicaines, exped. 3, Pl. 36.—The figures are surrounded by hieroglyphics of most arbitrary character, perhaps phonetic. (See, also, Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 1.—Gomara, Crónica de la Nueva-España, cap. 15, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.) Mr. Stephens considers that the celebrated "Cozumel Cross," preserved at Merida, which claims the credit of being the same originally worshipped by the natives of Cozumel, is, after all, nothing but a cross that was erected by the Spaniards in one of their own temples in that island after the Conquest. The fact he regards as "completely invalidating the strongest proof offered at this day that the Cross was recognized by the Indians as a symbol of worship." (Travels in Yucatan, vol. ii. chap. 20.) But, admitting the truth of this statement, that the Cozumel Cross is only a Christian relic, which the ingenious traveller has made extremely probable, his inference is by no means admissible. Nothing could be more natural than that the friars in Merida should endeavor to give celebrity to their convent by making it the possessor of so remarkable a monument as the very relic which proved, in their eyes, that Christianity had been preached at some earlier date among the natives. But the real proof of the existence of the Cross, as an object of worship, in the New World, does not rest on such spurious monuments as these, but on the unequivocal testimony of the Spanish discoverers themselves.

[25] "Lo recibian con gran reverencia, humiliacion, y lágrimas, diciendo que comian la carne de su Dios." Veytia, Hist. antig. lib. 1, cap. 18.—Also, Acosta, lib. 5, cap. 24.

With the same feelings they witnessed another ceremony, that of the Aztec baptism; in which, after a solemn invocation, the head and lips of the infant were touched with water, and a name was given to it; while the goddess Cioacoatl, who presided over childbirth, was implored "that the sin which was given to us before the beginning of the world might not visit the child, but that, cleansed by these waters, it might live and be born anew!"[26]

It is true, these several rites were attended with many peculiarities, very unlike those in any Chris-

[26] *Ante,* p. 78.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 6, cap. 37.—That the reader may see for himself how like, yet how unlike, the Aztec rite was to the Christian, I give the translation of Sahagun's account, at length: "When everything necessary for the baptism had been made ready, all the relations of the child were assembled, and the midwife, who was the person that performed the rite of baptism, was summoned. At early dawn, they met together in the court-yard of the house. When the sun had risen, the midwife, taking the child in her arms, called for a little earthen vessel of water, while those about her placed the ornaments which had been prepared for the baptism in the midst of the court. To perform the rite of baptism, she placed herself with her face towards the west, and immediately began to go through certain ceremonies. . . . After this she sprinkled water on the head of the infant, saying, 'O my child! take and receive the water of the Lord of the world, which is our life, and is given for the increasing and renewing of our body. It is to wash and to purify. I pray that these heavenly drops may enter into your body, and dwell there; that they may destroy and remove from you all the evil and sin which was given to you before the beginning of the world; since all of us are under its power, being all the children of Chalchivitlycue' [the goddess of water]. She then washed the body of the child with water, and spoke in this manner: 'Whencesoever thou comest, thou that art hurtful to this child, leave him and depart from him, for he now liveth anew, and is born anew; now is he purified and cleansed afresh, and our mother Chalchivitlycue again bringeth him into the world.' Having thus prayed, the midwife took the child in both hands, and, lifting him towards heaven, said, 'O Lord, thou seest here thy creature, whom thou hast sent into this world, this place of sorrow, suffering, and penitence. Grant him, O Lord, thy gifts and thine inspiration, for thou art the great God, and with thee

tian church. But the fathers fastened their eyes exclusively on the points of resemblance. They were not aware that the Cross was a symbol of worship, of the highest antiquity, in Egypt and Syria,[27] and that rites resembling those of communion [28] and baptism were practised by pagan nations on whom the light of Christianity had never shone.[29] In their amazement, they not only magnified what they saw, but were perpetually cheated by the illusions of their own heated imaginations. In this they were admirably assisted by their Mexican converts, proud to establish—and

is the great goddess.' Torches of pine were kept burning during the performance of these ceremonies. When these things were ended, they gave the child the name of some one of his ancestors, in the hope that he might shed a new lustre over it. The name was given by the same midwife, or priestess, who baptized him."

[27] Among Egyptian symbols we meet with several specimens of the Cross. One, according to Justus Lipsius, signified "life to come." (See his treatise, De Cruce (Lutetiæ Parisiorum, 1598), lib. 3, cap. 8.) We find another in Champollion's catalogue, which he interprets "support or saviour." (Précis, tom. ii., Tableau gén., Nos. 277, 348.) Some curious examples of the reverence paid to this sign by the ancients have been collected by McColloh (Researches, p. 330, et seq.), and by Humboldt, in his late work, Géographie du Nouveau-Continent, tom. ii. p. 354, et seq.

[28] "Ante, Deos homini quod conciliare valeret
Far erat,"

says Ovid. (Fastorum, lib. 1, v. 337.) Count Carli has pointed out a similar use of consecrated bread, and wine or water, in the Greek and Egyptian mysteries. (Lettres Américc., tom. i. let. 27.) See, also, McCulloh, Researches, p. 240, et seq.

[29] Water for purification and other religious rites is frequently noticed by the classical writers. Thus, Euripides:

"'Αγνοῖς καθαρμοῖς πρῶτά νιν νίψαι θέλω.
Θάλασσα κλύζει πάντα τἀνθρώπων κακά."

IPHIG. IN TAUR., VV. 1192, 1194.

The notes on this place, in the admirable Variorum edition of Glasgow, 1821, contain references to several passages of similar import in different authors.

half believing it themselves—a correspondence between their own faith and that of their conquerors.[30]

The ingenuity of the chronicler was taxed to find out analogies between the Aztec and Scripture histories, both old and new. The migration from Aztlan to Anahuac was typical of the Jewish exodus.[31] The places where the Mexicans halted on the march were identified with those in the journey of the Israelites;[32] and the name of Mexico itself was found to be nearly identical with the Hebrew name for the Messiah.[33] The Mexican hieroglyphics afforded a boundless field for the display of this critical acuteness. The most remarkable passages in the Old and New Testaments were read in their mysterious characters; and the eye of faith could trace there the whole story of the Passion, the Saviour suspended from the cross,

[30] The difficulty of obtaining anything like a faithful report from the natives is the subject of complaint from more than one writer, and explains the great care taken by Sahagun to compare their narratives with each other. See Hist. de Nueva-España, Prólogo,—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., Pról.,—Boturini, Idea, p. 116.

[31] The parallel was so closely pressed by Torquemada that he was compelled to suppress the chapter containing it, on the publication of his book. See the Proemio to the edition of 1723, sec. 2.

[32] "The devil," says Herrera, "chose to imitate, in everything, the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and their subsequent wanderings." (Hist. general, dec. 3, lib. 3, cap. 10.) But all that has been done by monkish annalist and missionary to establish the parallel with the children of Israel falls far short of Lord Kingsborough's learned labors, spread over nearly two hundred folio pages. (See Antiq. of Mexico, tom. vi. pp. 282-410.) *Quantum inane!*

[33] The word משיח, from which is derived *Christ,* "the anointed," is still more nearly—not "precisely," as Lord Kingsborough states (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 186)—identical with that of Mexi, or Mesi, the chief who was said to have led the Aztecs on the plains of Anahuac.

and the Virgin Mary with her attendant angels![34]

The Jewish and Christian schemes were strangely mingled together, and the brains of the good fathers were still further bewildered by the mixture of heathenish abominations which were so closely intertwined with the most orthodox observances. In their perplexity, they looked on the whole as the delusion of the devil, who counterfeited the rites of Christianity and the traditions of the chosen people, that he might allure his wretched victims to their own destruction.[35]

But, although it is not necessary to resort to this startling supposition, nor even to call up an apostle from the dead, or any later missionary, to explain the coincidences with Christianity, yet these coincidences must be allowed to furnish an argument in favor of some primitive communication with that great brotherhood of nations on the old continent, among whom similar ideas have been so widely diffused.* The probability of such a com-

[34] Interp. of Cod. Tel.-Rem. et Vat., Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi.—Sahagun, Hist. de Nueva-España, lib. 3, Suplem.—Veytia, Hist. antig., lib. 1, cap. 16.

[35] This opinion finds favor with the best Spanish and Mexican writers, from the Conquest downwards. Solís sees nothing improbable in the fact that "the malignant influence, so frequently noticed in sacred history, should be found equally in profane." Hist. de la Conquista, lib. 2, cap. 4.

* D. G. Brinton, International Congress of Anthropology, 1893 (Harper's Magazine, March, 1903, p. 534). "Up to the present time there has not been shown a single dialect, not an art or an institution, not a myth or religious rite, not a domesticated plant or animal, not a tool, weapon, game, or symbol, in use in America at the time of the discovery, which had been previously imported from Asia, or from any other continent of the Old World."—M.

munication, especially with Eastern Asia, is much strengthened by the resemblance of sacerdotal institutions, and of some religious rites, as those of marriage,[36] and the burial of the dead;[37] by the practice of human sacrifices, and even of cannibalism, traces of which are discernible in the Mongol races;[38] and, lastly, by a conformity of social usages and manners, so striking that the description of Montezuma's court may well pass for that of the Grand Khan's, as depicted by Maundeville and Marco Polo.[39] It would occupy too much room to go into details in this matter, without which, however, the strength of the argument cannot be felt, nor fully established. It has been done by others; and an occasional coincidence has been adverted to in the preceding chapters.

[36] The bridal ceremony of the Hindoos, in particular, contains curious points of analogy with the Mexican. (See Asiatic Researches, vol. vii. mem. 9.) The institution of a numerous priesthood, with the practices of confession and penance, was familiar to the Tartar people. (Maundeville, Voiage, chap. 23.) And monastic establishments were found in Thibet and Japan from the earliest ages. Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 179.

[37] "Doubtless," says the ingenious Carli, "the fashion of burning the corpse, collecting the ashes in a vase, burying them under pyramidal mounds, with the immolation of wives and servants at the funeral, all remind one of the customs of Egypt and Hindostan." Lettres Américc., tom. ii. let. 10.

[38] Marco Polo notices a civilized people in Southeastern China, and another in Japan, who drank the blood and ate the flesh of their captives, esteeming it the most savory food in the world,—"la più saporita et migliore, che si possa truovar al mondo." (Viaggi, lib. 2, cap. 75; lib. 3, 13, 14.) The Mongols, according to Sir John Maundeville, regarded the ears "sowced in vynegre" as a particular dainty. Voiage, chap. 23.

[39] Marco Polo, Viaggi, lib. 2, cap. 10.—Maundeville, Voiage, cap. 20, et alibi.—See, also, a striking parallel between the Eastern Asiatics and Americans, in the Supplement to Ranking's "Historical Researches;" a work embodying many curious details of Oriental history and manners in support of a whimsical theory.

It is true, we should be very slow to infer identity, or even correspondence, between nations, from a partial resemblance of habits and institutions. Where this relates to manners, and is founded on caprice, it is not more conclusive than when it flows from the spontaneous suggestions of nature, common to all. The resemblance, in the one case, may be referred to accident; in the other, to the constitution of man. But there are certain arbitrary peculiarities, which, when found in different nations, reasonably suggest the idea of some previous communication between them. Who can doubt the existence of an affinity, or, at least, intercourse, between tribes who had the same strange habit of burying the dead in a sitting posture, as was practised to some extent by most, if not all, of the aborigines, from Canada to Patagonia?[40] The habit of burning the dead, familiar to both Mongols and Aztecs, is in itself but slender proof of a common origin. The body must be disposed of in some way; and this, perhaps, is as natural as any other. But when to this is added the circumstance of collecting the ashes in a vase and depositing the single article of a precious stone along with them, the coincidence is remarkable.[41]

[40] Morton, Crania Americana (Philadelphia, 1839), pp. 224–246.—The industrious author establishes this singular fact by examples drawn from a great number of nations in North and South America.

[41] Gomara, Crónica de la Nueva-España, cap. 202, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. i. pp. 94, 95.—McCulloh (Researches, p. 198), who cites the Asiatic Researches.—Dr. McCulloh, in his single volume, has probably brought together a larger mass of materials for the illustration of the aboriginal history of the continent than any other writer in the language. In the selection of

Such minute coincidences are not unfrequent; while the accumulation of those of a more general character, though individually of little account, greatly strengthens the probability of a communication with the East.

A proof of a higher kind is found in the analogies of *science*. We have seen the peculiar chronological system of the Aztecs; their method of distributing the years into cycles, and of reckoning by means of periodical series, instead of numbers. A similar process was used by the various Asiatic nations of the Mongol family, from India to Japan. Their cycles, indeed, consisted of sixty, instead of fifty-two years; and for the terms of their periodical series they employed the names of the elements and the signs of the zodiac, of which latter the Mexicans, probably, had no knowledge. But the principle was precisely the same.[42]

A correspondence quite as extraordinary is found between the hieroglyphics used by the Aztecs for the signs of the days, and those zodiacal signs which the Eastern Asiatics employed as one of the terms of their series. The symbols in the Mongolian calendar are borrowed from animals. Four of the twelve are the same as the Aztec. Three others are as nearly the same as the differ-

his facts he has shown much sagacity, as well as industry; and, if the formal and somewhat repulsive character of the style has been unfavorable to a popular interest, the work must always have an interest for those who are engaged in the study of the Indian antiquities. His fanciful speculations on the subject of Mexican mythology may amuse those whom they fail to convince.

[42] *Ante*, p. 126, et seq.

ent species of animals in the two hemispheres would allow. The remaining five refer to no creature then found in Anahuac.[43] The resemblance went as far as it could.[44] The similarity of these conventional symbols among the several nations of the East can hardly fail to carry conviction of a common origin for the system as regards them. Why should not a similar conclusion be applied to the Aztec calendar, which, although relating to days instead of years, was, like the Asiatic, equally

[43] This will be better shown by enumerating the zodiacal signs, used as the *names of the years* by the Eastern Asiatics. Among the Mongols, these were—1, mouse; 2, ox; 3, leopard; 4, hare; 5, crocodile; 6, serpent; 7, horse; 8, sheep; 9, monkey; 10, hen; 11, dog; 12, hog. The Mantchou Tartars, Japanese, and Thibetians have nearly the same terms, substituting, however, for No. 3, tiger; 5, dragon; 8, goat. In the Mexican signs for the names of the days we also meet with *hare, serpent, monkey, dog.* Instead of the "leopard," "crocodile," and "hen,"—neither of which animals was known in Mexico at the time of the Conquest,—we find the *ocelotl,* the *lizard,* and the *eagle.*—The lunar calendar of the Hindoos exhibits a correspondence equally extraordinary. Six of the terms agree with those of the Aztecs, namely, *serpent, cane, razor, path of the sun, dog's tail, house.* (Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 152.) These terms, it will be observed, are still more arbitrarily selected, not being confined to animals; as, indeed, the hieroglyphics of the Aztec calendar were derived indifferently from them, and other objects, like the signs of our zodiac. These scientific analogies are set in the strongest light by M. de Humboldt, and occupy a large and, to the philosophical inquirer, the most interesting portion of his great work. (Vues des Cordillères, pp. 125–194.) He has not embraced in his tables, however, the Mongol calendar, which affords even a closer approximation to the Mexican than that of the other Tartar races. Comp. Ranking, Researches, pp. 370, 371, note.

[44] There is some inaccuracy in Humboldt's definition of the *ocelotl* as "the tiger," "the jaguar." (Ibid., p. 159.) It is smaller than the jaguar, though quite as ferocious, and is as graceful and beautiful as the leopard, which it more nearly resembles. It is a native of New Spain, where the tiger is not known. (See Buffon, Histoire naturelle (Paris, An VIII), tom. ii., *vox Ocelotl.*) The adoption of this latter name, therefore, in the Aztec calendar, leads to an inference somewhat exaggerated.

appropriated to chronological uses and to those of divination? [45]

I shall pass over the further resemblance to the Persians, shown in the adjustment of time by a similar system of intercalation; [46] and to the Egyptians, in the celebration of the remarkable festival of the winter solstice; [47] since, although sufficiently curious, the coincidences might be accidental, and add little to the weight of evidence offered by an agreement in combinations of so complex and artificial a character as those before stated.

Amid these intellectual analogies, one would expect to meet with that of *language,** the vehicle of intellectual communication, which usually exhibits traces of its origin even when the science and literature that are embodied in it have widely diverged. No inquiry, however, has led to satisfactory results. The languages spread over the Western continent far exceed in number those found in any equal population in the Eastern.[48]

[45] Both the Tartars and the Aztecs indicated the year by its sign; as the "year of the hare" or "rabbit," etc. The Asiatic signs, likewise, far from being limited to the years and months, presided also over days, and even hours. (Humboldt, Vues des Cordillères, p. 165.) The Mexicans had also astrological symbols appropriated to the hours. Gama, Descripcion, Parte 2, p. 117.

[46] *Ante,* p. 127, note.

[47] Achilles Tatius notices a custom of the Egyptians,—who, as the sun descended towards Capricorn, put on mourning, but, as the days lengthened, their fears subsided, they robed themselves in white, and, crowned with flowers, gave themselves up to jubilee, like the Aztecs. This account, transcribed by Carli's French translator, and by M. de Humboldt, is more fully criticized by M. Jomard in the Vues des Cordillères, p. 309, et seq.

[48] Jefferson (Notes on Virginia (London, 1787), p. 164), confirmed by Humboldt (Essai politique, tom. i. p. 353). Mr. Gallatin comes

* [See note, *ante,* p. 373.]

They exhibit the remarkable anomaly of differing as widely in etymology as they agree in organization; and, on the other hand, while they bear some slight affinity to the languages of the Old World in the former particular, they have no resemblance to them whatever in the latter.[49] The Mexican was spoken for an extent of three hundred leagues. But within the boundaries of New Spain more than twenty languages were found; not simply dialects, but, in many instances, radically different.[50] All these idioms, however, with one exception, conformed to that peculiar synthetic structure by which every Indian dialect appears to have been fashioned, from the land of the Esquimaux to Terra del Fuego;[51] a system which, bringing the

to a different conclusion. (Transactions of American Antiquarian Society (Cambridge, 1836), vol. ii. p. 161.) The great number of American dialects and languages is well explained by the unsocial nature of a hunter's life, requiring the country to be parcelled out into small and separate territories for the means of subsistence.

[49] Philologists have, indeed, detected two curious exceptions, in the Congo and primitive Basque; from which, however, the Indian languages differ in many essential points. See Du Ponceau's Report, ap. Transactions of the Lit. and Hist. Committee of the Am. Phil. Society, vol. i.

[50] Vater (Mithridates, Theil iii. Abtheil. 3, p. 70), who fixes on the Rio Gila and the Isthmus of Darien as the boundaries within which traces of the Mexican language were to be discerned. Clavigero estimates the number of dialects at thirty-five. I have used the more guarded statement of M. de Humboldt, who adds that fourteen of these languages have been digested into dictionaries and grammars. Essai politique, tom. i. p. 352.

[51] No one has done so much towards establishing this important fact as that estimable scholar, Mr. Du Ponceau. And the frankness with which he has admitted the exception that disturbed his favorite hypothesis shows that he is far more wedded to science than to system. See an interesting account of it, in his prize essay before the Institute, Mémoire sur le Système grammaticale des Langues de quelques Nations Indiennes de l'Amérique. (Paris, 1838.)

greatest number of ideas within the smallest possible compass, condenses whole sentences into a single word,[52] displaying a curious mechanism, in which some discern the hand of the philosopher, and others only the spontaneous efforts of the savage.[53]

The etymological affinities detected with the ancient continent are not very numerous, and they are drawn indiscriminately from all the tribes scattered over America. On the whole, more analogies have been found with the idioms of Asia than of any other quarter. But their amount is too inconsiderable to balance the opposite conclusion inferred by a total dissimilarity of structure.[54] A remarkable exception is found in the Othomi or Otomi language, which covers a wider territory than any other but the Mexican in New Spain,[55] and which,

[52] The Mexican language, in particular, is most flexible; admitting of combinations so easily that the most simple ideas are often buried under a load of accessories. The forms of expression, though picturesque, were thus made exceedingly cumbrous. A "priest," for example, was called *notlazomahuizteopixcatatzin,* meaning "venerable minister of God, that I love as my father." A still more comprehensive word is *amatlacuilolitquitcatlaxtlahuitli,* signifying "the reward given to a messenger who bears a hieroglyphical map conveying intelligence."

[53] See, in particular, for the latter view of the subject, the arguments of Mr. Gallatin, in his acute and masterly disquisition on the Indian tribes; a disquisition that throws more light on the intricate topics of which it treats than whole volumes that have preceded it. Transactions of the American Antiquarian Society, vol. ii. Introd., sec. 6.

[54] This comparative anatomy of the languages of the two hemispheres, begun by Barton (Origin of the Tribes and Nations of America (Philadelphia, 1797)), has been extended by Vater (Mithridates, Theil iii. Abtheil. 1, p. 348, et seq.). A selection of the most striking analogies may be found, also, in Malte Brun, book 75, table.

[55] *Othomi,* from *otho,* "stationary," and *mi,* "nothing." (Najera,

both in its monosyllabic composition, so different from those around it, and in its vocabulary, shows a very singular affinity to the Chinese.[56] The existence of this insulated idiom in the heart of this vast continent offers a curious theme for speculation, entirely beyond the province of history.

The American languages, so numerous and widely diversified, present an immense field of inquiry, which, notwithstanding the labors of several distinguished philologists, remains yet to be explored. It is only after a wide comparison of examples that conclusions founded on analogy can be trusted. The difficulty of making such comparisons increases with time, from the facility which the peculiar structure of the Indian languages affords for new combinations; while the insensible influence of contact with civilized man, in producing these, must lead to a still further distrust of our conclusions.

The theory of an Asiatic origin for Aztec civilization derives stronger confirmation from the light of *tradition,* which, shining steadily from the far Northwest, pierces through the dark shadows that history and mythology have alike thrown around the traditions of the country. Traditions of a Western or Northwestern origin were found

Dissert., *ut infra.*) The etymology intimates the condition of this rude nation of warriors, who, imperfectly reduced by the Aztec arms, roamed over the high lands north of the Valley of Mexico.

[56] See Najera's Dissertatio de Lingua Othomitorum, ap. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, vol. v. New Series.—The author, a learned Mexican, has given a most satisfactory analysis of this remarkable language, which stands alone among the idioms of the New World, as the Basque—the solitary wreck, perhaps, of a primitive age—exists among those of the Old.

among the more barbarous tribes,[57] and by the Mexicans were preserved both orally and in their hieroglyphical maps, where the different stages of their migration are carefully noted. But who, at this day, shall read them?[58] They are admitted to agree, however, in representing the populous North as the prolific hive of the American races.[59] In this quarter were placed their Aztlan and their Huehuetlapallan,—the bright abodes of their ancestors, whose warlike exploits rivalled those which the Teutonic nations have recorded of Odin

[57] Barton, p. 92.—Heckewelder, chap. 1, ap. Transactions of the Hist. and Lit. Committee of the Am. Phil. Soc., vol. i.—The various traditions have been assembled by M. Warden, in the Antiquités Mexicaines, part 2, p. 185, et seq.

[58] The recent work of Mr. Delafield (Inquiry into the Origin of the Antiquities of America (Cincinnati, 1839)) has an engraving of one of these maps, said to have been obtained by Mr. Bullock from Boturini's collection. Two such are specified on page 10 of that antiquary's Catalogue. This map has all the appearance of a genuine Aztec painting, of the rudest character. We may recognize, indeed, the symbols of some dates and places, with others denoting the aspect of the country, whether fertile or barren, a state of war or peace, etc. But it is altogether too vague, and we know too little of the allusions, to gather any knowledge from it of the course of the Aztec migration.—Gemelli Carreri's celebrated chart contains the names of many places on the route, interpreted, perhaps, by Siguenza himself, to whom it belonged (Giro del Mondo, tom. vi. 56); and Clavigero has endeavored to ascertain the various localities with some precision. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 160, et seq.) But, as they are all within the boundaries of New Spain, and, indeed, south of the Rio Gila, they throw little light, of course, on the vexed question of the primitive abodes of the Aztecs.

[59] This may be fairly gathered from the agreement of the *traditionary* interpretations of the maps of the various people of Anahuac, according to Veytia; who, however, admits that it is "next to impossible," with the lights of the present day, to determine the precise route taken by the Mexicans. (Hist. antig., tom. i. cap. 2.) Lorenzana is not so modest. "Los Mexicanos por tradicion viniéron por el norte," says he, "y se saben ciertamente sus mansiones." (Hist. de Nueva-España, p. 81, nota.) There are some antiquaries who see best in the dark.

and the mythic heroes of Scandinavia. From this quarter the Toltecs, the Chichimecs, and the kindred races of the Nahuatlacs came successively up the great plateau of the Andes, spreading over its hills and valleys, down to the Gulf of Mexico.[60]

Antiquaries have industriously sought to detect some still surviving traces of these migrations. In the northwestern districts of New Spain, at the distance of a thousand miles from the capital, dialects have been discovered showing intimate affinity with the Mexican.[61] Along the Rio Gila, remains of populous towns are to be seen, quite worthy of the Aztecs in their style of architecture.[62] The country north of the great Rio Colorado has been imperfectly explored; but in the higher latitudes, in the neighborhood of Nootka, tribes still exist

[60] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 2, et seq.—Idem, Relaciones, MS.—Veytia, Hist. antig., ubi supra.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., tom. i. lib. 1.

[61] In the province of Sonora, especially along the California Gulf. The Cora language, above all, of which a regular grammar has been published, and which is spoken in New Biscay, about 30° north, so much resembles the Mexican that Vater refers them both to a common stock. Mithridates, Theil iii. Abtheil. 3, p. 143.

[62] On the southern bank of this river are ruins of large dimensions, described by the missionary Pedro Font on his visit there in 1775. (Antiq. of Mexico, vol. vi. p. 538.)—At a place of the same name, Casas Grandes, about 33° north, and, like the former, a supposed station of the Aztecs, still more extensive remains are to be found; large enough, indeed, according to a late traveller, Lieut. Hardy, for a population of 20,000 or 30,000 souls. The country for leagues is covered with these remains, as well as with utensils of earthenware, obsidian, and other relics. A drawing which the author has given of a painted jar or vase may remind one of the Etruscan. "There were, also, good specimens of earthen images in the Egyptian style," he observes, "which are, *to me at least, so perfectly uninteresting* that I was at no pains to procure any of them." (Travels in the Interior of Mexico (London, 1829), pp. 464-466.) The lieutenant was neither a Boturini nor a Belzoni.

whose dialects, both in the termination and general sound of the words, bear considerable resemblance to the Mexican.[63] Such are the vestiges, few, indeed, and feeble, that still exist to attest the truth of traditions which themselves have remained steady and consistent through the lapse of centuries and the migrations of successive races.

The conclusions suggested by the intellectual and moral analogies with Eastern Asia derive considerable support from those of a *physical nature.* The aborigines of the Western World were distinguished by certain peculiarities of organization, which have led physiologists to regard them as a separate race. These peculiarities are shown in their reddish complexion, approaching a cinnamon color; their straight, black, and exceedingly glossy hair; their beard thin, and usually eradicated;[64] their high cheek-bones, eyes obliquely directed towards the temples, prominent noses, and narrow foreheads falling backwards with a greater inclination than those of any other race except the African.[65] From this general standard, however, there are deviations, in the same manner, if not to the

[63] Vater has examined the languages of three of these nations, between 50° and 60° north, and collated their vocabularies with the Mexican, showing the probability of a common origin of many of the words in each. Mithridates, Theil iii. Abtheil. 3, p. 212.

[64] The Mexicans are noticed by M. de Humboldt as distinguished from the other aborigines whom he had seen, by the quantity both of beard and moustaches. (Essai politique, tom. i. p. 361.) The modern Mexican, however, broken in spirit and fortunes, bears as little resemblance, probably, in physical as in moral characteristics to his ancestors, the fierce and independent Aztecs.

[65] Prichard, Physical History, vol. i. pp. 167–169, 182, et seq.—Morton, Crania Americana, p. 66.—McCulloh, Researches, p. 18.—Lawrence, Lectures, pp. 317, 565.

same extent, as in other quarters of the globe, though these deviations do not seem to be influenced by the same laws of local position.[66] Anatomists, also, have discerned in crania disinterred from the mounds, and in those of the inhabitants of the high plains of the Cordilleras, an obvious difference from those of the more barbarous tribes. This is seen especially in the ampler forehead, intimating a decided intellectual superiority.[67] These characteristics are found to bear a close resemblance to those of the Mongolian family, and especially to the people of Eastern Tartary;[68] so that, notwithstanding certain differences recognized by physiologists, the skulls of the two races could not be readily distinguished from one another by a common observer. No inference can be surely drawn, however, without a wide range of comparison. That hitherto made has been chiefly founded

[66] Thus we find, amidst the generally prevalent copper or cinnamon tint, nearly all gradations of color, from the European white, to a black, almost African; while the complexion capriciously varies among different tribes in the neighborhood of each other. See examples in Humboldt (Essai politique, tom. i. pp. 358, 359), also Prichard (Physical History, vol. ii. pp. 452, 522, et alibi), a writer whose various research and dispassionate judgment have made his work a text-book in this department of science.

[67] Such is the conclusion of Dr. Warren, whose excellent collection has afforded him ample means for study and comparison. (See his Remarks before the British Association for the Advancement of Science, ap. London Athenæum, Oct., 1837.) In the specimens collected by Dr. Morton, however, the barbarous tribes would seem to have a somewhat larger facial angle, and a greater quantity of brain, than the semi-civilized. Crania Americana, p. 259.

[68] "On ne peut se refuser d'admettre que l'espèce humaine n'offre pas de races plus voisines que le sont celles des Américaines, des Mongols, des Mantchoux, et des Malais." Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. i. p. 367.—Also, Prichard, Physical History, vol. i. pp. 184–186; vol. ii. pp. 365–367.—Lawrence, Lectures, p. 365.

on specimens from the barbarous tribes.[69] Perhaps a closer comparison with the more civilized may supply still stronger evidences of affinity.[70]

In seeking for analogies with the Old World, we should not pass by in silence the *architectural remains* of the country, which, indeed, from their resemblance to the pyramidal structures of the East, have suggested to more than one antiquary the idea of a common origin.[71] The Spanish in-

[69] Dr. Morton's splendid work on American crania has gone far to supply the requisite information. Out of about one hundred and fifty specimens of skulls, of which he has ascertained the dimensions with admirable precision, one-third belong to the semi-civilized races; and of them thirteen are Mexican. The number of these last is too small to found any general conclusions upon, considering the great diversity found in individuals of the same nation, not to say kindred. —Blumenbach's observations on American skulls were chiefly made, according to Prichard (Physical History, vol. i. pp. 183, 184), from specimens of the Carib tribes, as unfavorable, perhaps, as any on the continent.

[70] Yet these specimens are not so easy to be obtained. With uncommon advantages for procuring these myself in Mexico, I have not succeeded in obtaining any specimens of the genuine Aztec skull. The difficulty of this may be readily comprehended by any one who considers the length of time that has elapsed since the Conquest, and that the burial-places of the ancient Mexicans have continued to be used by their descendants. Dr. Morton more than once refers to his specimens as those of the "genuine Toltec skull, from cemeteries in Mexico, older than the Conquest." (Crania Americana, pp. 152, 155, 231, et alibi.) But how does he know that the heads are Toltec? That nation is reported to have left the country about the middle of the eleventh century, nearly eight hundred years ago, —according to Ixtlilxochitl, indeed, a century earlier; and it seems much more probable that the specimens now found in these burial-places should belong to some of the races who have since occupied the country, than to one so far removed. The presumption is manifestly too feeble to authorize any positive inference.

[71] The tower of Belus, with its retreating stories, described by Herodotus (Clio, sec. 181), has been selected as the model of the *teocalli;* which leads Vater somewhat shrewdly to remark that it is strange no evidence of this should appear in the erection of similar structures by the Aztecs in the whole course of their journey

vaders, it is true, assailed the Indian buildings, especially those of a religious character, with all the fury of fanaticism. The same spirit survived in the generations which succeeded. The war has never ceased against the monuments of the country; and the few that fanaticism has spared have been nearly all demolished to serve the purposes of utility. Of all the stately edifices, so much extolled by the Spaniards who first visited the country, there are scarcely more vestiges at the present day than are to be found in some of those regions of Europe and Asia which once swarmed with populous cities, the great marts of luxury and commerce.[72] Yet some of these remains, like the temple of Xochicalco,[73] the palaces of Tezcot-

to Anahuac. (Mithridates, Theil iii. Abtheil. 3, pp. 74, 75.) The learned Niebuhr finds the elements of the Mexican temple in the mythic tomb of Porsenna. (Roman History, Eng. trans. (London, 1827), vol. i. p. 88.) The resemblance to the accumulated pyramids composing this monument is not very obvious. Com. Pliny (Hist. Nat., lib. 36, sec. 19). Indeed, the antiquarian may be thought to encroach on the poet's province when he finds in Etruscan *fable*—"cum omnia excedat fabulositas," as Pliny characterizes this—the origin of Aztec science.

[72] See the powerful description of Lucan, Pharsalia, lib. 9, v. 966. —The Latin bard has been surpassed by the Italian, in the beautiful stanza beginning *Giace l' alta Cartago* (Gerusalemme Liberata, c. 15, s. 20), which may be said to have been expanded by Lord Byron into a canto,—the fourth of Childe Harold.

[73] The most remarkable remains on the proper Mexican soil are the temple or fortress of Xochicalco, not many miles from the capital. It stands on a rocky eminence, nearly a league in circumference, cut into terraces faced with stone. The building on the summit is seventy-five feet long and sixty-six broad. It is of hewn granite, put together without cement, but with great exactness. It was constructed in the usual pyramidal, terraced form, rising by a succession of stories, each smaller than that below it. The number of these is now uncertain; the lower one alone remaining entire. This is sufficient, however, to show the nice style of execution, from the sharp, salient cornices, and the hieroglyphical emblems with which it is

zinco,[74] the colossal calendar-stone in the capital, are of sufficient magnitude, and wrought with sufficient skill, to attest mechanical powers in the Aztecs not unworthy to be compared with those of the ancient Egyptians.

But, if the remains on the Mexican soil are so scanty, they multiply as we descend the southeastern slope of the Cordilleras, traverse the rich Valley of Oaxaca, and penetrate the forests of Chiapa and Yucatan. In the midst of these lonely regions we meet with the ruins, recently discovered, of several ancient cities, Mitla, Palenque, and Itzalana or Uxmal,[75] which argue a higher civilization

covered, all cut in the hard stone. As the detached blocks found among the ruins are sculptured with bas-reliefs in like manner, it is probable that the whole building was covered with them. It seems probable, also, as the same pattern extends over different stones, that the work was executed after the walls were raised.—In the hill beneath, subterraneous galleries, six feet wide and high, have been cut to the length of one hundred and eighty feet, where they terminate in two halls, the vaulted ceilings of which connect by a sort of tunnel with the buildings above. These subterraneous works are also lined with hewn stone. The size of the blocks, and the hard quality of the granite of which they consist, have made the buildings of Xochicalco a choice quarry for the proprietors of a neighboring sugar-refinery, who have appropriated the upper stories of the temple to this ignoble purpose! The Barberini at least built palaces, beautiful themselves, as works of art, with the plunder of the Coliseum. See the full description of this remarkable building, both by Dupaix and Alzate. (Antiquités Mexicaines, tom. i. Exp. 1, pp. 15–20; tom. iii. Exp. 1, Pl. 33.) A recent investigation has been made by order of the Mexican government, the report of which differs, in some of its details, from the preceding. Revista Mexicana, tom. i. mem. 5.

[74] *Ante,* pp. 196–199.

[75] It is impossible to look at Waldeck's finished drawings of buildings, where Time seems scarcely to have set his mark on the nicely chiselled stone, and the clear tints are hardly defaced by a weather-stain, without regarding the artist's work as a *restoration;* a picture true, it may be, of those buildings in the day of their glory, but not of their decay.—Cogolludo, who saw them in the middle of

than anything yet found on the American continent; and, although it was not the Mexicans who built these cities, yet, as they are probably the work of cognate races, the present inquiry would be incomplete without some attempt to ascertain what light they can throw on the origin of the Indian, and consequently of the Aztec civilization.[76]

Few works of art have been found in the neighborhood of any of the ruins.* Some of them, consisting of earthen or marble vases, fragments of statues, and the like, are fantastic, and even hideous; others show much grace and beauty of design,

the seventeenth century, speaks of them with admiration, as works of "accomplished architects," of whom history has preserved no tradition. Historia de Yucatan (Madrid, 1688), lib. 4, cap. 2.†

[76] In the original text is a description of some of these ruins, especially of those of Mitla and Palenque. It would have had novelty at the time in which it was written, since the only accounts of these buildings were in the colossal publications of Lord Kingsborough, and in the Antiquités Mexicaines, not very accessible to most readers. But it is unnecessary to repeat descriptions now familiar to every one, and so much better executed than they can be by me, in the spirited pages of Stephens.

* [Bandelier (Archæological Tour in Mexico) gives an account of the statues, etc., found in Mexico up to the year 1881.—M.]

† [The age of these ancient cities is still an unsolved problem, but the conviction seems to be growing that many of them were inhabited at the time of the Conquest. The sacred edifices at Uxmal did not cease to be used until some time after the Spaniards had become lords of the land. Charnay (Ancient Cities of the New World, p. 328) thinks Chichen Itza was inhabited "scarcely sixty years before the Conquest." Bandelier (Peabody Museum Report, ii. 126) says of the Tablet of the Cross at Palenque, "These tablets and figures show in dress such a striking analogy of what we know of the military accoutrements of the Mexicans, that it is a strong approach to identity." Bancroft (Native Races, vol. iv.) specifies the literature dealing with Palenque. For a while scholars were mystified by Waldeck's absurd elephants on the walls of Palenque. But after a time these animal representations were shown to have existed only in the artist's brain.—M.]

and are apparently well executed.[77] It may seem extraordinary that no iron in the buildings themselves, nor iron tools, should have been discovered, considering that the materials used are chiefly granite, very hard, and carefully hewn and polished. Red copper chisels and axes have been picked up in the midst of large blocks of granite imperfectly cut, with fragments of pillars and architraves, in the quarries near Mitla.[78] Tools of a similar kind have been discovered, also, in the quarries near Thebes; and the difficulty, nay, impossibility, of cutting such masses from the living rock with any tools which we possess, except iron, has confirmed an ingenious writer in the supposition that this metal must have been employed by the Egyptians, but that its tendency to decomposition, especially in a nitrous soil, has prevented any specimens of it from being preserved.[79] Yet iron has been found, after the lapse of some thousands of years, in the remains of antiquity; and it is certain that the Mexicans, down to the time of the Conquest, used only copper instruments, with an alloy of tin, and a silicious powder, to cut the hardest stones, some of them of enormous dimensions.[80] This fact, with the additional circumstance that

[77] See, in particular, two terra-cotta busts with helmets, found in Oaxaca, which might well pass for Greek, both in the style of the heads and the casques that cover them. Antiquités Mexicaines, tom. iii. Exp. 2, Pl. 36.

[78] Dupaix speaks of these tools as made of pure copper. But doubtless there was some alloy mixed with it, as was practised by the Aztecs and Egyptians; otherwise their edges must have been easily turned by the hard substances on which they were employed.

[79] Wilkinson, Ancient Egyptians, vol. iii. pp. 246–254.

[80] *Ante,* p. 155.

only similar tools have been found in Central America, strengthens the conclusion that iron was neither known there nor in ancient Egypt.

But what are the nations of the Old Continent whose style of architecture bears most resemblance to that of the remarkable monuments of Chiapa and Yucatan? The points of resemblance will probably be found neither numerous nor decisive. There is, indeed, some analogy both to the Egyptian and Asiatic style of architecture in the pyramidal, terrace-formed bases on which the buildings repose, resembling also the Toltec and Mexican *teocalli*. A similar care, also, is observed in the people of both hemispheres to adjust the position of their buildings by the cardinal points. The walls in both are covered with figures and hieroglyphics, which, on the American as on the Egyptian, may be designed, perhaps, to record the laws and historical annals of the nation. These figures, as well as the buildings themselves, are found to have been stained with various dyes, principally vermilion;[81] a favorite color with the Egyptians also, who painted their colossal statues and temples of granite.[82] Notwithstanding these points of similarity, the Palenque architecture has little to re-

[81] Waldeck, Atlas pittoresque, p. 73.—The fortress of Xochicalco was also colored with a red paint (Antiquités Mexicaines, tom. i. p. 20); and a cement of the same color covered the Toltec pyramid at Teotihuacan, according to Mr. Bullock, Six Months in Mexico, vol. ii. p. 143.

[82] Description de l'Egypte, Antiq., tom. ii. cap. 9, sec. 4.—The huge image of the Sphinx was originally colored red. (Clarke's Travels, vol. v. p. 202.) Indeed, many of the edifices, as well as statues, of ancient Greece, also, still exhibit traces of having been painted.

mind us of the Egyptian or of the Oriental. It is, indeed, more conformable, in the perpendicular elevation of the walls, the moderate size of the stones, and the general arrangement of the parts, to the European. It must be admitted, however, to have a character of originality peculiar to itself.

More positive proofs of communication with the East might be looked for in their sculpture and in the conventional forms of their hieroglyphics. But the sculptures on the Palenque buildings are in relief, unlike the Egyptian, which are usually in *intaglio*. The Egyptians were not very successful in their representations of the human figure, which are on the same invariable model, always in profile, from the greater facility of execution this presents over the front view; the full eye is placed on the side of the head, while the countenance is similar in all, and perfectly destitute of expression.[83] The Palenque artists were equally awkward in representing the various attitudes of the body, which they delineated also in profile. But the parts are executed with much correctness, and sometimes gracefully; the costume is rich and various; and the ornamented head-dress, typical, perhaps, like the Aztec, of the name and condition of the person represented, conforms in its magnificence to the Oriental taste. The countenance is various, and often expressive. The contour of the head is, in-

[83] The various causes of the stationary condition of art in Egypt, for so many ages, are clearly exposed by the Duke di Serradifalco, in his *Antichità della Sicilia* (Palermo, 1834, tom. ii. pp. 33, 34); a work in which the author, while illustrating the antiquities of a little island, has thrown a flood of light on the arts and literary culture of ancient Greece.

deed, most extraordinary, describing almost a semicircle from the forehead to the tip of the nose, and contracted towards the crown, whether from the artificial pressure practised by many of the aborigines, or from some preposterous notion of ideal beauty.[84] But, while superior in the execution of the details, the Palenque artist was far inferior to the Egyptian in the number and variety of the objects displayed by him, which on the Theban temples comprehend animals as well as men, and almost every conceivable object of use or elegant art.

The hieroglyphics are too few on the American buildings to authorize any decisive inference. On comparing them, however, with those of the Dresden Codex, probably from this same quarter of the country,[85] with those on the monument of Xochicalco, and with the ruder picture-writing of the Aztecs, it is not easy to discern anything which indicates a common system. Still less obvious is the resemblance to the Egyptian characters, whose refined and delicate abbreviations approach almost

[84] "The ideal is not always the beautiful," as Winckelmann truly says, referring to the Egyptian figures. (Histoire de l'Art chez les Anciens, liv. 4, chap. 2, trad. Fr.) It is not impossible, however, that the portraits mentioned in the text may be copies from life. Some of the rude tribes of America distorted their infants' heads into forms quite as fantastic; and Garcilaso de la Vega speaks of a nation discovered by the Spaniards in Florida, with a formation apparently not unlike the Palenque: "*Tienen cabezas increiblemente largas, y ahusadas para arriba,* que las ponen así con artificio, atándoselas desde el punto, que nascen las criaturas, hasta que son de nueve ó diez años." La Florida (Madrid, 1723), p. 190.

[85] For a notice of this remarkable codex, see *ante,* p. 119. There is, indeed, a resemblance, in the use of straight lines and dots, between the Palenque writing and the Dresden MS. Possibly these dots denoted years, like the rounds in the Mexican system.

to the simplicity of an alphabet. Yet the Palenque writing shows an advanced stage of the art, and, though somewhat clumsy, intimates, by the conventional and arbitrary forms of the hieroglyphics, that it was symbolical, and perhaps phonetic, in its character.[86] That its mysterious import will ever be deciphered is scarcely to be expected. The language of the race who employed it, the race itself, is unknown. And it is not likely that another Rosetta stone will be found, with its trilingual inscription, to supply the means of comparison, and to guide the American Champollion in the path of discovery.

It is impossible to contemplate these mysterious monuments of a lost civilization without a strong feeling of curiosity as to who were their architects and what is their probable age. The data on which to rest our conjectures of their age are not very substantial; although some find in them a warrant for an antiquity of thousands of years, coeval with the architecture of Egypt and Hindostan.[87] But the interpretation of hieroglyphics, and the apparent duration of trees, are vague and unsatisfac-

[86] The hieroglyphics are arranged in perpendicular lines. The heads are uniformly turned towards the right, as in the Dresden MS.

[87] "Les ruines," says the enthusiastic chevalier Le Noir, "sans nom, à qui l'on a donné celui de *Palenque*, peuvent remonter comme les plus anciennes ruines du monde à trois mille ans. Ceci n'est point mon opinion seule; c'est celle de *tous* les voyageurs qui ont vu les ruines dont il s'agit, de *tous* les archéologues qui en ont examiné les dessins ou lu les descriptions, enfin des historiens qui ont fait des recherches, et qui n'ont rien trouvé dans les annales du monde qui fasse soupçonner l'époque de la fondation de tels monuments, dont l'origine se perd dans la nuit des temps." (Antiquités Mexicaines, tom. ii., Examen, p. 73.) Colonel Galindo, fired with the contemplation of the American ruins, pronounces this country the true

tory.[88] And how far can we derive an argument from the discoloration and dilapidated condition of the ruins, when we find so many structures of the Middle Ages dark and mouldering with decay, while the marbles of the Acropolis and the gray stone of Pæstum still shine in their primitive splendor?

There are, however, undoubted proofs of considerable age to be found there. Trees have shot up in the midst of the buildings, which measure, it is said, more than nine feet in diameter.[89] A still more striking fact is the accumulation of vegetable mould in one of the courts, to the depth of nine feet above the pavement.[90] This in our latitude

cradle of civilization, whence it passed over to China, and latterly to Europe, which, whatever "its foolish vanity" may pretend, has but just started in the march of improvement! See his Letter on Copan, ap. Trans. of Am. Ant. Soc., vol. ii.

[88] From these sources of information, and especially from the number of the concentric rings in some old trees, and the incrustation of stalactites found on the ruins of Palenque, M. Waldeck computes their age at between two and three thousand years. (Voyage en Yucatan, p. 78.) The criterion, as far as the trees are concerned, cannot be relied on in an advanced stage of their growth; and as to the stalactite formations, they are obviously affected by too many casual circumstances, to afford the basis of an accurate calculation.*

[89] Waldeck, Voyage en Yucatan, ubi supra.

[90] Antiquités Mexicaines, Examen, p. 76.—Hardly deep enough, however, to justify Captain Dupaix's surmise of the antediluvian

* [Charnay (Ancient Cities of the New World, p. 260) shows the worthlessness of the argument from tree growth. He says, "In my first expedition to Palenque in 1859, I had the eastern side of the palace cleared of the dense vegetation to secure a good photograph. Consequently, the trees that have grown since cannot be more than twenty-two years old; now one of the cuttings, measuring some two feet in diameter, had upwards of 230 concentric circles, that is, at the rate of one in a month, or even less." Reasoning on the idea that a concentric circle upon a tree represents a growth of one year, Waldeck had calculated the age of the structures at 2000 years.—M.]

would be decisive of a very great antiquity. But in the rich soil of Yucatan, and under the ardent sun of the tropics, vegetation bursts forth with irrepressible exuberance, and generations of plants succeed each other without intermission, leaving an accumulation of deposits that would have perished under a northern winter. Another evidence of their age is afforded by the circumstance that in one of the courts of Uxmal the granite pavement,* on which the figures of tortoises were raised in relief, is worn nearly smooth by the feet of the crowds who have passed over it;[91] a curious fact, suggesting inferences both in regard to the age and population of the place. Lastly, we have authority for carrying back the date of many of these ruins to a certain period, since they were found in a deserted, and probably dilapidated, state by the first Spaniards who entered the country. Their notices, indeed, are brief and casual, for the old Conquerors had little respect for works of art;[92] and it is fortunate for these structures

existence of these buildings; especially considering that the accumulation was in the sheltered position of an interior court.

[91] Waldeck, Voyage en Yucatan, p. 97.

[92] The chaplain of Grijalva speaks with admiration of the "lofty towers of stone and lime, some of them very ancient," found in Yucatan. (Itinerario, MS. (1518).) Bernal Diaz, with similar expressions of wonder, refers the curious antique relics found there to the Jews. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 2, 6.) Alvarado, in a letter to

* [Ober, Travels in Mexico, p. 76. This granite pavement with its carven tortoises has never been seen by mortal man, although described by the unreliable and wonder-seeking Waldeck. It is true that there are many sculptures of this kind in Uxmal, but only on the doors and cornices. Ancona in his history says, "Estes tortugas, expuestas a las piedras de la muchedumbre, solo han existido en la imaginacion de Waldeck." Ancona was the native historian of Yucatan.—M.]

that they had ceased to be the living temples of the gods, since no merit of architecture, probably, would have availed to save them from the general doom of the monuments of Mexico.

If we find it so difficult to settle the age of these buildings, what can we hope to know of their architects? Little can be gleaned from the rude people by whom they are surrounded. The old Tezcucan chronicler so often quoted by me, the best authority for the traditions of his country, reports that the Toltecs, on the breaking up of their empire,—which he places earlier than most authorities, in the middle of the tenth century,—migrating from Anahuac, spread themselves over Guatemala, Tehuantepec, Campeachy, and the coasts and neigh-

Cortés, expatiates on the "maravillosos et grandes edificios" to be seen in Guatemala. (Oviedo, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 33, cap. 42.) According to Cogolludo, the Spaniards, who could get no tradition of their origin, referred them to the Phœnicians or Carthaginians. (Hist. de Yucatan, lib. 4, cap. 2.) He cites the following emphatic notice of these remains from Las Casas: "Ciertamente la tierra de Yucathan da á entender cosas mui especiales, y de mayor antiguedad, por las grandes, admirables, y excessivas maneras de edificios, y letreros de ciertos caracteres, que en otra ninguna parte se hallan." (Loc. cit.) Even the inquisitive Martyr has collected no particulars respecting them, merely noticing the buildings of this region with general expressions of admiration. (De Insulis nuper Inventis, pp. 334–340.) What is quite as surprising is the silence of Cortés, who traversed the country forming the base of Yucatan, in his famous expedition to Honduras, of which he has given many details we would gladly have exchanged for a word respecting these interesting memorials. Carta Quinta de Cortés, MS.—I must add that some remarks in the above paragraph in the text would have been omitted, had I enjoyed the benefit of Mr. Stephens's researches when it was originally written. This is especially the case with the reflections on the probable condition of these structures at the time of the Conquest; when some of them would appear to have been still used for their original purposes.

boring isles on both sides of the Isthmus.[93] This assertion, important, considering its source, is confirmed by the fact that several of the nations in that quarter adopted systems of astronomy and chronology, as well as sacerdotal institutions, very similar to the Aztec,[94] which, as we have seen, were also probably derived from the Toltecs, their more polished predecessors in the land.

If so recent a date for the construction of the American buildings be thought incompatible with this oblivion of their origin, it should be remembered how treacherous a thing is tradition, and how easily the links of the chain are severed. The builders of the pyramids had been forgotten before the time of the earliest Greek historians.[95] The antiquary still disputes whether the frightful inclination of that architectural miracle, the tower of Pisa, standing, as it does, in the heart of a populous city, was the work of accident or design. And we have seen how soon the Tezcucans, dwelling amidst the ruins of their royal palaces, built just before the Conquest, had forgotten their history, while the

[93] "Asimismo los Tultecas que escapáron se fuéron por las costas del Mar del Sur y Norte, como son Huatimala, Tecuantepec, Cuauhzacualco, Campechy, Tecolotlan, y los de las Islas y Costas de una mar y otra, que despues se viniéron á multiplicar." Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 5.

[94] Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 4, lib. 10, cap. 1–4.—Cogolludo, Hist. de Yucatan, lib. 4, cap. 5.—Pet. Martyr, De Insulis, ubi supra.—M. Waldeck comes to just the opposite inference, namely, that the inhabitants of Yucatan were the true sources of the Toltec and Aztec civilization. (Voyage en Yucatan, p. 72.) "Doubt must be our lot in everything," exclaims the honest Captain Dupaix,—"*the true faith always excepted.*" Antiquités Mexicaines, tom. i. p. 21.

[95] "Inter omnes eos non constat a quibus factæ sint, justissimo casu, obliteratis tantæ vanitatis auctoribus." Pliny, Hist. Nat., lib. 36, cap. 17.

more inquisitive traveller refers their construction to some remote period before the Aztecs.[96]

The reader has now seen the principal points of coincidence insisted on between the civilization of ancient Mexico and the Eastern hemisphere. In presenting them to him, I have endeavored to confine myself to such as rest on sure historic grounds, and not so much to offer my own opinion as to enable him to form one for himself. There are some material embarrassments in the way to this, however, which must not be passed over in silence. These consist, not in explaining the fact that, while the mythic system and the science of the Aztecs afford some striking points of analogy with the Asiatic, they should differ in so many more; for the same phenomenon is found among the nations of the Old World, who seem to have borrowed from one another those ideas, only, best suited to their peculiar genius and institutions. Nor does the difficulty lie in accounting for the great dissimilarity of the American languages to those in the other hemisphere; for the difference with these is not greater than what exists among themselves; and no one will contend for a separate origin for each of the aboriginal tribes.[97] But it is scarcely possible to reconcile the knowledge of Oriental science with the total ignorance of some of the most serviceable and familiar arts, as the use of milk and

[96] *Ante*, p. 200.

[97] At least, this is true of the etymology of these languages, and, as such, was adduced by Mr. Edward Everett, in his Lectures on the Aboriginal Civilization of America, forming part of a course delivered some years since by that acute and highly accomplished scholar.

iron, for example; arts so simple, yet so important to domestic comfort, that when once acquired they could hardly be lost.

The Aztecs had no useful domesticated animals. And we have seen that they employed bronze, as a substitute for iron, for all mechanical purposes. The bison, or wild cow of America, however, which ranges in countless herds over the magnificent prairies of the west, yields milk like the tame animal of the same species in Asia and Europe;[98] and iron was scattered in large masses over the surface of the table-land. Yet there have been people considerably civilized in Eastern Asia who were almost equally strangers to the use of milk.[99] The buffalo range was not so much on the western coast as on the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains;[100] and the migratory Aztec might well

[98] The mixed breed, from the buffalo and the European stock, was known formerly in the northwestern counties of Virginia, says Mr. Gallatin (Synopsis, sec. 5); who is, however, mistaken in asserting that "the bison is not known to have ever been domesticated by the Indians." (Ubi supra.) Gomara speaks of a nation, dwelling about 40° north latitude, on the northwestern borders of New Spain, whose chief wealth was in droves of these cattle (*buyes con una giba sobre la cruz,* "oxen with a hump on the shoulders"), from which they got their clothing, food, and drink, which last, however, appears to have been only the blood of the animal. Historia de las Indias, cap. 214, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.

[99] The people of parts of China, for example, and, above all, of Cochin China, who never milk their cows, according to Macartney, cited by Humboldt, Essai politique, tom. iii. p. 58, note. See, also, p. 118.

[100] The native regions of the buffalo were the vast prairies of the Missouri, and they wandered over the long reach of country east of the Rocky Mountains, from 55° north, to the headwaters of the streams between the Mississippi and the Rio del Norte. The Columbia plains, says Gallatin, were as naked of game as of trees. (Synop-

doubt whether the wild, uncouth monsters whom he occasionally saw bounding with such fury over the distant plains were capable of domestication, like the meek animals which he had left grazing in the green pastures of Asia. Iron, too, though met with on the surface of the ground, was more tenacious, and harder to work, than copper, which he also found in much greater quantities on his route. It is possible, moreover, that his migration may have been previous to the time when iron was used by his nation; for we have seen more than one people in the Old World employing bronze and copper with entire ignorance, apparently, of any more serviceable metal.[101]—Such

sis, sec. 5.) That the bison was sometimes found also on the other side of the mountains, is plain from Gomara's statement. (Hist. de las Ind., loc. cit.) See, also, Laet, who traces their southern wanderings to the river Vaquimi (?), in the province of Cinaloa, on the California Gulf. Novus Orbis (Lugd. Bat., 1633), p. 286.

[101] *Ante*, p. 155.

Thus Lucretius:

> "Et prior æris erat, quam ferri cognitus usus,
> Quo facilis magis est natura, et copia major.
> Ære solum terræ tractabant, æreque belli
> Miscebant fluctus."
>
> De Rerum Natura, lib. 5.

According to Carli, the Chinese were acquainted with iron 3000 years before Christ. (Lettres Améric., tom. ii. p. 63.) Sir J. G. Wilkinson, in an elaborate inquiry into its first appearance among the people of Europe and Western Asia, finds no traces of it earlier than the sixteenth century before the Christian era. (Ancient Egyptians, vol. iii. pp. 241–246.) The origin of the most useful arts is lost in darkness. Their very utility is one cause of this, from the rapidity with which they are diffused among distant nations. Another cause is, that in the first ages of the discovery men are more occupied with availing themselves of it than with recording its history; until time turns history into fiction. Instances are familiar to every school-boy.

is the explanation, unsatisfactory, indeed, but the best that suggests itself, of this curious anomaly.

The consideration of these and similar difficulties has led some writers to regard the antique American civilization as purely indigenous. Whichever way we turn, the subject is full of embarrassment. It is easy, indeed, by fastening the attention on one portion of it, to come to a conclusion. In this way, while some feel little hesitation in pronouncing the American civilization original, others, no less certainly, discern in it a Hebrew, or an Egyptian, or a Chinese, or a Tartar origin, as their eyes are attracted by the light of analogy too exclusively to this or the other quarter. The number of contradictory lights, of itself, perplexes the judgment and prevents us from arriving at a precise and positive inference. Indeed, the affectation of this, in so doubtful a matter, argues a most unphilosophical mind. Yet where there is most doubt there is often the most dogmatism.

The reader of the preceding pages may perhaps acquiesce in the general conclusions,—not startling by their novelty,—

First, that the coincidences are sufficiently strong to authorize a belief that the civilization of Anahuac was in some degree influenced by that of Eastern Asia.

And, secondly, that the discrepancies are such as to carry back the communication to a very remote period; so remote that this foreign influence has been too feeble to interfere materially with the

growth of what may be regarded in its essential features as a peculiar and indigenous civilization.*

* [And in this connection also the reader may do well to consider these words of the distinguished Americanist, D. G. Brinton, uttered in the International Congress of Anthropology in 1893: "Up to the present time there has not been shown a single dialect, not an art or an institution, not a myth or a religious rite, not a domesticated plant or animal, not a tool, weapon, game, or symbol, in use in America at the time of the discovery, which had been previously imported from Asia, or from any other continent of the Old World."—M.]

BOOK II

DISCOVERY OF MEXICO

PORTRAIT OF CHARLES V.

PORTRAIT OF CHARLES V.

Goupil & Cº Paris

BOOK II

DISCOVERY OF MEXICO

CHAPTER I

SPAIN UNDER CHARLES V—PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY —COLONIAL POLICY—CONQUEST OF CUBA—EXPEDITIONS TO YUCATAN

1516–1518

IN the beginning of the sixteenth century, Spain occupied perhaps the most prominent position on the theatre of Europe. The numerous states into which she had been so long divided were consolidated into one monarchy. The Moslem crescent, after reigning there for eight centuries, was no longer seen on her borders. The authority of the crown did not, as in later times, overshadow the inferior orders of the state. The people enjoyed the inestimable privilege of political representation, and exercised it with manly independence. The nation at large could boast as great a degree of constitutional freedom as any other, at that time, in Christendom. Under a system of salutary laws and an equitable administration, domestic tranquillity was secured, public credit established,

trade, manufactures, and even the more elegant arts, began to flourish; while a higher education called forth the first blossoms of that literature which was to ripen into so rich a harvest before the close of the century. Arms abroad kept pace with arts at home. Spain found her empire suddenly enlarged by important acquisitions both in Europe and Africa, while a New World beyond the waters poured into her lap treasures of countless wealth and opened an unbounded field for honorable enterprise.

Such was the condition of the kingdom at the close of the long and glorious reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, when, on the 23d of January, 1516, the sceptre passed into the hands of their daughter Joanna, or rather their grandson,* Charles the

* [The grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella was not Charles the Fifth when the sceptre of Spain was thrust into his hands because his mother Joanna was unfit to rule. Charles called himself king when he made his triumphal entry into Valladolid in 1517. But it was only with the greatest difficulty that the Cortes of Castile was induced to accept him as titular sovereign *in conjunction with his mother.* Her name was to take precedence of his in all royal documents. Until her death in 1555, the year before her son's abdication, Joanna was the rightful sovereign of Spain. Charles was elected emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519, only two years after he had assumed the control of Spanish affairs. It is not remarkable, therefore, that he should be known to most people only by the more important title. Charles was born in Ghent, February 24, 1500. His father was Philip the Fair, the heir of the German possessions of the house of Hapsburg, and the territories of the house of Burgundy. When the marriage of Philip and Joanna was arranged no one dreamed that their son would succeed to the crown of Spain, for Joanna's elder brother and elder sister were both alive. Charles scarcely knew his parents. When Isabella of Castile died his father and mother went to Spain to take possession of the kingdom she had left to her daughter. This was in 1506, and from that time until 1517 Charles did not see his mother. His character was slow in forming. Only in athletic sports did he early achieve success. In 1517 the Papal legate Campeggi declared him

Fifth, who alone ruled the monarchy during the long and imbecile existence of his unfortunate mother. During the two years following Ferdinand's death, the regency, in the absence of Charles, was held by Cardinal Ximenes, a man whose intrepidity, extraordinary talents, and capacity for great enterprises were accompanied by a haughty spirit, which made him too indifferent as to the means of their execution. His administration, therefore, notwithstanding the uprightness of his intentions, was, from his total disregard of forms, unfavorable to constitutional liberty; for respect for forms is an essential element of freedom. With all his faults, however, Ximenes was a Spaniard; and the object he had at heart was the good of his country.

It was otherwise on the arrival of Charles, who, after a long absence, came as a foreigner into the land of his fathers. (November, 1517.) His manners, sympathies, even his language, were foreign, for he spoke the Castilian with difficulty. He knew little of his native country, of the character of the people or their institutions. He seemed to care still less for them; while his natural reserve precluded that freedom of communication which might have counteracted, to some extent, at least, the errors of education. In everything, in short,

more fit to be governed than to govern. He was never a good scholar, and was a singularly bad linguist. French was the language he first learned to speak. His native tongue, Flemish, he did not begin to learn until he was thirteen. When he went to Spain he knew so little Spanish that one of the first demands made by the Cortes of Castile was that he should learn that language. He never thoroughly mastered German.—M.]

he was a foreigner, and resigned himself to the direction of his Flemish counsellors with a docility that gave little augury of his future greatness.

On his entrance into Castile, the young monarch was accompanied by a swarm of courtly sycophants, who settled, like locusts, on every place of profit and honor throughout the kingdom. A Fleming was made grand chancellor of Castile; another Fleming was placed in the archiepiscopal see of Toledo. They even ventured to profane the sanctity of the Cortes, by intruding themselves on its deliberations. Yet that body did not tamely submit to these usurpations, but gave vent to its indignation in tones becoming the representatives of a free people.[1]

The deportment of Charles, so different from that to which the Spaniards had been accustomed under the benign administration of Ferdinand and Isabella, closed all hearts against him; and, as his character came to be understood, instead of the spontaneous outpourings of loyalty which usually greet the accession of a new and youthful sovereign, he was everywhere encountered by opposi-

[1] The following passage—one among many—from that faithful mirror of the times, Peter Martyr's correspondence, does ample justice to the intemperance, avarice, and intolerable arrogance of the Flemings. The testimony is worth the more, as coming from one who, though resident in Spain, was not a Spaniard. "Crumenas auro fulcire inhiant; huic uni studio invigilant. Nec detrectat juvenis Rex. Farcit quacunque posse datur; non satiat tamen. Quæ qualisve sit gens hæc, depingere adhuc nescio. Insufflat vulgus hic in omne genus hominum non arctoum. Minores faciunt Hispanos, quam si nati essent inter eorum cloacas. Rugiunt jam Hispani, labra mordent, submurmurant taciti, fatorum vices tales esse conqueruntur, quod ipsi domitores regnorum ita floccifiant ab his, quorum Deus unicus (sub rege temperato) Bacchus est cum Citherea." Opus Epistolarum (Amstelodami, 1610), ep. 608.

tion and disgust. In Castile, and afterwards in Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia, the commons hesitated to confer on him the title of *King* during the lifetime of his mother; and, though they eventually yielded this point, and associated his name with hers in the sovereignty, yet they reluctantly granted the supplies he demanded, and, when they did so, watched over their appropriation with a vigilance which left little to gratify the cupidity of the Flemings. The language of the legislature on these occasions, though temperate and respectful, breathes a spirit of resolute independence not to be found, probably, on the parliamentary records of any other nation at that period. No wonder that Charles should have early imbibed a disgust for these popular assemblies,—the only bodies whence truths so unpalatable could find their way to the ears of the sovereign![2] Unfortunately, they had no influence on his conduct; till the discontent, long allowed to fester in secret, broke out in that sad war of the *comunidades,* which shook the state to its foundations and ended in the subversion of its liberties.*

[2] Yet the nobles were not all backward in manifesting their disgust. When Charles would have conferred the famous Burgundian order of the Golden Fleece on the Count of Benavente, that lord refused it, proudly telling him, "I am a Castilian. I desire no honors but those of my own country, in my opinion quite as good as—indeed, better than—those of any other." Sandoval, Historia de la Vida y Hechos del Emperador Cárlos V. (Ambéres, 1681), tom. i. p. 103.

* [The tone of the preceding paragraphs is that of the Spanish chroniclers of the seventeenth century, and shows how the author, despite his natural candor and impartiality of mind, had acquired insensibly the habit of considering questions that affected Spain from the national point of view of the class of writers with whom his studies had made him most familiar. Spain is called the "native

The same pestilent foreign influence was felt, though much less sensibly, in the colonial administration. This had been placed, in the preceding reign, under the immediate charge of the two great tribunals, the Council of the Indies, and the *Casa de Contratacion,* or India House, at Seville. It was their business to further the progress of discovery, watch over the infant settlements, and adjust the disputes which grew up in them. But the licenses granted to private adventurers did more for the cause of discovery than the patronage of the crown or its officers. The long peace, enjoyed with slight interruption by Spain in the early part of the sixteenth century, was most auspicious for this; and the restless cavalier, who could no longer win laurels on the fields of Africa or Europe, turned with eagerness

country" of Charles V., and the "land of his fathers," although, as hardly any reader will need to be reminded, he was born in the Netherlands and was of Spanish descent only on the maternal side. The term "foreigner" is applied to him as if it indicated some vicious trait in his nature; and the training which he had received as the heir to the Austro-Burgundian dominions is spoken of as erroneous, merely because it had not fitted him for a different position. His manners are contrasted with those of native Spanish sovereigns, as if wanting in graciousness and affability; yet the Spaniards, who alone ever made this complaint, recognized their own ideal of royal demeanor in that of the taciturn and phlegmatic Philip II. In like manner, Charles is supposed to have made his first acquaintance with free institutions on his arrival in Spain; whereas he had been brought up in a country where the power of the sovereign was perhaps more closely restricted by the chartered rights and immunities of the subject than was the case in any other part of Europe. That the union of Spain and the Netherlands was a most incongruous one, disastrous to the freedom, the independence, and the development of both countries, is undeniable; but it was not Charles's early partiality for the one, but his successor's far stronger partiality for the other, which rendered the incompatibility apparent and led to a rupture of the connection.—K.]

to the brilliant career opened to him beyond the ocean.

It is difficult for those of our time, as familiar from childhood with the most remote places on the globe as with those in their own neighborhood, to picture to themselves the feelings of the men who lived in the sixteenth century. The dread mystery which had so long hung over the great deep had, indeed, been removed. It was no longer beset with the same undefined horrors as when Columbus launched his bold bark on its dark and unknown waters. A new and glorious world had been thrown open. But as to the precise spot where that world lay, its extent, its history, whether it were island or continent,—of all this they had very vague and confused conceptions. Many, in their ignorance, blindly adopted the erroneous conclusion into which the great Admiral had been led by his superior science,—that the new countries were a part of Asia; and, as the mariner wandered among the Bahamas, or steered his caravel across the Caribbean Seas, he fancied he was inhaling the rich odors of the spice-islands in the Indian Ocean. Thus every fresh discovery, interpreted by this previous delusion, served to confirm him in his error, or, at least, to fill his mind with new perplexities.

The career thus thrown open had all the fascinations of a desperate hazard, on which the adventurer staked all his hopes of fortune, fame, and life itself. It was not often, indeed, that he won the rich prize which he most coveted; but then he was sure to win the meed of glory, scarcely less

dear to his chivalrous spirit; and, if he survived to return to his home, he had wonderful stories to recount, of perilous chances among the strange people he had visited, and the burning climes whose rank fertility and magnificence of vegetation so far surpassed anything he had witnessed in his own. These reports added fresh fuel to imaginations already warmed by the study of those tales of chivalry which formed the favorite reading of the Spaniards at that period. Thus romance and reality acted on each other, and the soul of the Spaniard was exalted to that pitch of enthusiasm which enabled him to encounter the terrible trials that lay in the path of the discoverer. Indeed, the life of the cavalier of that day was romance put into action. The story of his adventures in the New World forms one of the most remarkable pages in the history of man.

Under this chivalrous spirit of enterprise, the progress of discovery had extended, by the beginning of Charles the Fifth's reign, from the Bay of Honduras, along the winding shores of Darien, and the South American continent, to the Rio de la Plata. The mighty barrier of the Isthmus had been climbed, and the Pacific descried, by Nuñez de Balboa, second only to Columbus in this valiant band of "ocean chivalry." The Bahamas and Caribbee Islands had been explored, as well as the Peninsula of Florida on the northern continent. This latter point had been reached by Sebastian Cabot in his descent along the coast from Labrador, in 1497. So that before 1518, the period when our narrative begins, the eastern borders of both

the great continents had been surveyed through nearly their whole extent. The shores of the great Mexican Gulf, however, sweeping with a wide circuit far into the interior, remained still concealed, with the rich realms that lay beyond, from the eye of the navigator. The time had now come for their discovery.

The business of colonization had kept pace with that of discovery. In several of the islands, and in various parts of Terra Firma, and in Darien, settlements had been established, under the control of governors who affected the state and authority of viceroys. Grants of land were assigned to the colonists, on which they raised the natural products of the soil, but gave still more attention to the sugar-cane, imported from the Canaries. Sugar, indeed, together with the beautiful dye-woods of the country and the precious metals, formed almost the only articles of export in the infancy of the colonies, which had not yet introduced those other staples of the West Indian commerce which in our day constitute its principal wealth. Yet the precious metals, painfully gleaned from a few scanty sources, would have made poor returns, but for the gratuitous labor of the Indians.

The cruel system of *repartimientos,* or distribution of the Indians as slaves among the conquerors, had been suppressed by Isabella. Although subsequently countenanced by the government, it was under the most careful limitations. But it is impossible to license crime by halves,—to authorize injustice at all, and hope to regulate the measure of it. The eloquent remonstrances of the Domini-

cans,—who devoted themselves to the good work of conversion in the New World with the same zeal that they showed for persecution in the Old,—but, above all, those of Las Casas, induced the regent, Ximenes, to send out a commission with full powers to inquire into the alleged grievances and to redress them. It had authority, moreover, to investigate the conduct of the civil officers, and to reform any abuses in their administration. This extraordinary commission consisted of three Hieronymite friars and an eminent jurist, all men of learning and unblemished piety.

They conducted the inquiry in a very dispassionate manner, but, after long deliberation, came to a conclusion most unfavorable to the demands of Las Casas, who insisted on the entire freedom of the natives. This conclusion they justified on the grounds that the Indians would not labor without compulsion, and that, unless they labored, they could not be brought into communication with the whites, nor be converted to Christianity. Whatever we may think of this argument, it was doubtless urged with sincerity by its advocates, whose conduct through their whole administration places their motives above suspicion. They accompanied it with many careful provisions for the protection of the natives. But in vain. The simple people, accustomed all their days to a life of indolence and ease, sank under the oppressions of their masters, and the population wasted away with even more frightful rapidity than did the aborigines in our own country under the operation of other causes. It is not necessary to pursue these details further,

into which I have been led by the desire to put the reader in possession of the general policy and state of affairs in the New World at the period when the present narrative begins.[3]

Of the islands, Cuba was the second discovered; but no attempt had been made to plant a colony there during the lifetime of Columbus, who, indeed, after skirting the whole extent of its southern coast, died in the conviction that it was part of the continent.[4] At length, in 1511, Diego, the son and successor of the "Admiral," who still maintained the seat of government in Hispaniola,* finding the mines much exhausted there, proposed to occupy the neighboring island of Cuba, or Fernandina, as it was called in compliment to the Spanish monarch.[5] He prepared a small force for the conquest, which he placed under the command of Don Diego Velasquez; a man described by a contemporary as "possessed of considerable

[3] I will take the liberty to refer the reader who is desirous of being more minutely acquainted with the Spanish colonial administration and the state of discovery previous to Charles V., to the "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella" (Part 2, ch. 9, 26), where the subject is treated *in extenso*.†

[4] See the curious document attesting this, and drawn up by order of Columbus, ap. Navarrete, Coleccion de los Viages y de Descubrimientos (Madrid, 1825), tom. ii. Col. Dip., No. 76.

[5] The island was originally called by Columbus Juana, in honor of Prince John, heir to the Castilian crown. After his death it received the name of Fernandina, at the king's desire. The Indian name has survived both. Herrera, Hist. general, Descrip., cap. 6.

* [Now Haiti and Santo Domingo.—M.]

† [All the documents relative to the commission sent out by Ximenes, including many reports from the commissioners, have been printed in the Col. de Doc. inéd. relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Colonizacion de las Posesiones españolas en América y Oceanía, tom. i.—K.]

experience in military affairs, having served seventeen years in the European wars; as honest, illustrious by his lineage and reputation, covetous of glory, and somewhat more covetous of wealth." [6] The portrait was sketched by no unfriendly hand.

Velasquez, or rather his lieutenant, Narvaez, who took the office on himself of scouring the country, met with no serious opposition from the inhabitants, who were of the same family with the effeminate natives of Hispaniola. The conquest, through the merciful interposition of Las Casas, "the protector of the Indians," who accompanied the army in its march, was effected without much bloodshed. One chief, indeed, named Hatuey, having fled originally from St. Domingo to escape the oppression of its invaders, made a desperate resistance, for which he was condemned by Velasquez to be burned alive. It was he who made that memorable reply, more eloquent than a volume of invective. When urged at the stake to embrace Christianity, that his soul might find admission into heaven, he inquired if the white men would go there. On being answered in the affirmative, he exclaimed, "Then I will not be a Christian; for I would not go again to a place where I must find men so cruel!" [7]

After the conquest, Velasquez, now appointed

[6] "Erat Didacus, ut hoc in loco de eo semel tantum dicamus, veteranus miles, rei militaris gnarus, quippe qui septem et decem annos in Hispania militiam exercitus fuerat, homo probus, opibus, genere et fama clarus, honoris cupidus, pecuniæ aliquanto cupidior." De Rebus gestis Ferdinandi Cortesii, MS.

[7] The story is told by Las Casas in his appalling record of the cruelties of his countrymen in the New World, which charity—and

governor, diligently occupied himself with measures for promoting the prosperity of the island. He formed a number of settlements, bearing the same names with the modern towns, and made St. Jago,* on the southeast corner, the seat of government.[8] He invited settlers by liberal grants of land and slaves. He encouraged them to cultivate the soil, and gave particular attention to the sugar-cane, so profitable an article of commerce in later times. He was, above all, intent on working the gold-mines, which promised better returns than those in Hispaniola. The affairs of his government did not prevent him, meanwhile, from casting many a wistful glance at the discoveries going forward on the continent, and he longed for an opportunity to embark in these golden adventures himself. Fortune gave him the occasion he desired.

An *hidalgo* of Cuba, named Hernandez de Cordova, sailed with three vessels on an expedition to one of the neighboring Bahama Islands, in quest of Indian slaves.† (February 8, 1517.) He

common sense—may excuse us for believing the good father has greatly overcharged. Brevíssima Relacion de la Destruycion de las Indias (Venetia, 1643), p. 28.

[8] Among the most ancient of these establishments we find the Havana, Puerto del Príncipe, Trinidad, St. Salvador, and Matanzas, or *the Slaughter*, so called from a massacre of the Spaniards there by the Indians. Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 8.

* [Santiago de Cuba.—M.]

† [This statement is erroneous. Prescott did not know that the Havana, or San Cristobal, whence Cordova sailed, was on the south side of Cuba. All authorities agree that the expedition sailed directly westward, that the storm did not occur until Cape San Antonio had been passed, and that the fleet sailed westward by the will of its commander. See Bancroft's Mexico, vol. i. p. 7.—M.]

encountered a succession of heavy gales which drove him far out of his course, and at the end of three weeks he found himself on a strange and unknown coast. On landing and asking the name of the country, he was answered by the natives, "*Tectetan,*" meaning, "I do not understand you,"—but which the Spaniards, misinterpreting into the name of the place, easily corrupted into Yucatan. Some writers give a different etymology.[9] Such mistakes, however, were not uncommon with the early discoverers, and have been the origin of many a name on the American continent.[10]

Cordova had landed on the northeastern end of the peninsula, at Cape Catoche. He was astonished at the size and solid materials of the buildings, constructed of stone and lime, so different from the frail tenements of reeds and rushes which formed the habitations of the islanders. He was struck, also, with the higher cultivation of the soil, and with the delicate texture of the cotton garments and gold ornaments of the natives. Everything indicated a civilization far superior to anything he had before witnessed in the New World. He saw the evidence of a different race, moreover,

[9] Gomara, Historia de las Indias, cap. 52, ap. Barcia, tom. ii.—Bernal Diaz says the word came from the vegetable *yuca,* and *tale* the name for a hillock in which it is planted. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 6.) M. Waldeck finds a much more plausible derivation in the Indian word *Ouyouckatan,* "listen to what they say." Voyage pittoresque, p. 25.

[10] Two navigators, Solís and Pinzon, had descried the coast as far back as 1506, according to Herrera, though they had not taken possession of it. (Hist. general, dec. 1, lib. 6, cap. 17.) It is, indeed, remarkable it should so long have eluded discovery, considering that it is but two degrees distant from Cuba.

in the warlike spirit of the people. Rumors of the Spaniards had, perhaps, preceded them, as they were repeatedly asked if they came from the east; and wherever they landed they were met with the most deadly hostility. Cordova himself, in one of his skirmishes with the Indians, received more than a dozen wounds, and one only of his party escaped unhurt. At length, when he had coasted the peninsula as far as Campeachy, he returned to Cuba, which he reached after an absence of several months, having suffered all the extremities of ill which these pioneers of the ocean were sometimes called to endure, and which none but the most courageous spirit could have survived. As it was, half the original number, consisting of one hundred and ten men, perished, including their brave commander, who died soon after his return. The reports he had brought back of the country, and, still more, the specimens of curiously wrought gold, convinced Velasquez of the importance of this discovery, and he prepared with all despatch to avail himself of it.[11]

He accordingly fitted out a little squadron of four vessels for the newly-discovered lands, and placed it under the command of his nephew, Juan de Grijalva, a man on whose probity, prudence, and attachment to himself he knew he could rely. The fleet left the port of St. Jago de Cuba, May 1,

[11] Oviedo, General y natural Historia de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Carta del Cabildo de Vera Cruz (July 10, 1519), MS.—Bernal Diaz denies that the original object of the expedition, in which he took part, was to procure slaves, though Velasquez had proposed it. (Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 2.) But he is contradicted in this by the other contemporary records above cited.

1518.[12] * It took the course pursued by Cordova, but was driven somewhat to the south, the first land that it made being the island of Cozumel. From this quarter Grijalva soon passed over to the continent, and coasted the peninsula, touching at the same place as his predecessor. Everywhere he was struck, like him, with the evidences of a higher civilization, especially in the architecture; as he well might be, since this was the region of those extraordinary remains which have become recently the subject of so much speculation. He was astonished, also, at the sight of large stone crosses, evidently objects of worship, which he met with in various places. Reminded by these circumstances of his own country, he gave the peninsula the name of "New Spain," a name since appropriated to a much wider extent of territory.[13]

Wherever Grijalva landed, he experienced the same unfriendly reception as Cordova; though he suffered less, being better prepared to meet it. In the *Rio de Tabasco,* or *Grijalva,* as it is often called, after him, he held an amicable conference with a chief who gave him a number of gold plates fashioned into a sort of armor. As he wound round the Mexican coast, one of his captains, Pedro de Alvarado, afterwards famous in the Con-

[12] Itinerario de la Isola de Iuchathan, novamente ritrovata per il Signor Joan de Grijalva, per il suo Capellano, MS.—The chaplain's word may be taken for the date, which is usually put at the eighth of April.

[13] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Itinerario del Capellano, MS.

* [The fleet left Santiago, April 8, 1518, and Cape San Antonio, May 1.—M.]

quest, entered a river, to which he, also, left his own name. In a neighboring stream, called the *Rio de Vanderas,* or " River of Banners," from the ensigns displayed by the natives on its borders, Grijalva had the first communication with the Mexicans themselves.

The cacique who ruled over this province had received notice of the approach of the Europeans, and of their extraordinary appearance. He was anxious to collect all the information he could respecting them and the motives of their visit, that he might transmit them to his master, the Aztec emperor.[14] A friendly conference took place between the parties on shore, where Grijalva landed with all his force, so as to make a suitable impression on the mind of the barbaric chief. The interview lasted some hours, though, as there was no one on either side to interpret the language of the other, they could communicate only by signs. They, however, interchanged presents, and the Spaniards had the satisfaction of receiving, for a few worthless toys and trinkets, a rich treasure of jewels, gold ornaments and vessels, of the most fantastic forms and workmanship.[15]

Grijalva now thought that in this successful traffic—successful beyond his most sanguine ex-

[14] According to the Spanish authorities, the cacique was sent with these presents from the Mexican sovereign, who had received previous tidings of the approach of the Spaniards. I have followed Sahagun, who obtained his intelligence directly from the natives. Historia de la Conquista, MS., cap. 2.

[15] Gomara has given the *per* and *contra* of this negotiation, in which gold and jewels of the value of fifteen or twenty thousand *pesos de oro* were exchanged for glass beads, pins, scissors, and other trinkets common in an assorted cargo for savages. Crónica, cap. 6.

pectations—he had accomplished the chief object of his mission. He steadily refused the solicitations of his followers to plant a colony on the spot,—a work of no little difficulty in so populous and powerful a country as this appeared to be. To this, indeed, he was inclined, but deemed it contrary to his instructions, which limited him to barter with the natives. He therefore despatched Alvarado in one of the caravels back to Cuba, with the treasure and such intelligence as he had gleaned of the great empire in the interior, and then pursued his voyage along the coast.

He touched at San Juan de Ulua, and at the *Isla de los Sacrificios,* so called by him from the bloody remains of human victims found in one of the temples. He then held on his course as far as the province of Panuco, where, finding some difficulty in doubling a boisterous headland, he returned on his track, and, after an absence of nearly six months, reached Cuba in safety. Grijalva has the glory of being the first navigator who set foot on the Mexican soil and opened an intercourse with the Aztecs.[16]

On reaching the island, he was surprised to learn that another and more formidable armament had been fitted out to follow up his own discoveries, and to find orders, at the same time, from the governor, couched in no very courteous language, to repair at once to St. Jago. He was received by that personage not merely with coldness, but with reproaches for having neglected so fair an opportunity of establishing a colony in the country he

[16] Itinerario del Capellano, MS.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

had visited. Velasquez was one of those captious spirits who, when things do not go exactly to their minds, are sure to shift the responsibility of the failure from their own shoulders, where it should lie, to those of others. He had an ungenerous nature, says an old writer, credulous, and easily moved to suspicion.[17] In the present instance it was most unmerited. Grijalva, naturally a modest, unassuming person, had acted in obedience to the instructions of his commander, given before sailing, and had done this in opposition to his own judgment and the importunities of his followers. His conduct merited anything but censure from his employer.[18]

When Alvarado had returned to Cuba with his golden freight, and the accounts of the rich empire of Mexico which he had gathered from the natives, the heart of the governor swelled with rapture as he saw his dreams of avarice and ambition so likely to be realized. Impatient of the long absence of Grijalva, he despatched a vessel in search of him under the command of Olid, a cavalier who took an important part afterwards in the Conquest. Finally he resolved to fit out another armament on a sufficient scale to insure the subjugation of the country.

He previously solicited authority for this from

[17] "Hombre de terrible condicion," says Herrera, citing the good Bishop of Chiapa, "para los que le servian, i aiudaban, i que facilmente se indignaba contra aquellos." Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 10.

[18] At least, such is the testimony of Las Casas, who knew both the parties well, and had often conversed with Grijalva upon his voyage. Historia general de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.

the Hieronymite commission in St. Domingo. He then despatched his chaplain to Spain with the royal share of the gold brought from Mexico, and a full account of the intelligence gleaned there. He set forth his own manifold services, and solicited from the court full powers to go on with the conquest and colonization of the newly-discovered regions.[19] Before receiving an answer, he began his preparations for the armament, and, first of all, endeavored to find a suitable person to share the expense of it and to take the command. Such a person he found, after some difficulty and delay, in Hernando Cortés; the man of all others best calculated to achieve this great enterprise,—the last man to whom Velasquez, could he have foreseen the results, would have confided it.

[19] Itinerario del Capellano, MS.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.—The most circumstantial account of Grijalva's expedition is to be found in the *Itinerary* of his chaplain above quoted. The original is lost, but an indifferent Italian version was published at Venice in 1522. A copy, which belonged to Ferdinand Columbus, is still extant in the library of the great church of Seville. The book had become so exceedingly rare, however, that the historiographer Muñoz made a transcript of it with his own hand; and from his manuscript that in my possession was taken.*

* [Several editions of the Itinerario have been published. The most easily accessible may be found in the *Coleccion de documentos para la historia de Mexico, etc.,* tom. i.—M.]

PORTRAIT OF HERNANDO CORTÉS

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* Bernaldez del Castillano, MS.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 118.—The most circumstantial account of Grijalva's expedition is to be found in the *Itinerary* of his chaplain Aguilar. The original is lost, but an indifferent Italian version was published at Venice in 1582. A copy, which belonged to Ferdinand Columbus, is still extant in the library of the great church of Seville. The book has become so exceedingly rare, however, that the bibliographer Muñoz made a transcript of it with his own hand, and from his manuscript that in my possession was taken.*

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PORTRAIT OF HERNANDO CORTÉS

Coupil & Cie Paris

CHAPTER II

HERNANDO CORTÉS—HIS EARLY LIFE—VISITS THE NEW WORLD—HIS RESIDENCE IN CUBA—DIFFICULTIES WITH VELASQUEZ—ARMADA INTRUSTED TO CORTÉS

1518

HERNANDO CORTÉS was born at Medellin, a town in the southeast corner of Estremadura,[1] in 1485.[2] He came of an ancient and respectable family; and historians have gratified the national vanity by tracing it up to the Lombard kings, whose descendants crossed the Pyrenees and established themselves in Aragon under

[1] [The house in which he was born, in the Calle de la Feria, was preserved until the present century, and many a traveller has lodged there, desirous, says Alaman, of sleeping in the mansion where the hero was born. In the year 1809 the building was destroyed by the French, and only a few fragments of wall now remain to commemorate the birthplace of the Conqueror. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. p. 2.]

[2] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 1.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 203. I find no more precise notice of the date of his birth, except, indeed, by Pizarro y Orellana, who tells us that "Cortés came into the world the same day that that *infernal beast, the false heretic Luther,* entered it,—by way of compensation, no doubt, since the labors of the one to pull down the true faith were counterbalanced by those of the other to maintain and extend it"! (Varones ilustres del Nuevo-Mundo (Madrid, 1639), p. 66.) But this statement of the good cavalier, which places the birth of our hero in 1483, looks rather more like a zeal for "the true faith" than for historic.

the Gothic monarchy.[3] This royal genealogy was not found out till Cortés had acquired a name which would confer distinction on any descent, however noble. His father, Martin Cortés de Monroy, was a captain of infantry, in moderate circumstances, but a man of unblemished honor; and both he and his wife, Doña Catalina Pizarro Altamirano, appear to have been much regarded for their excellent qualities.[4]

In his infancy Cortés is said to have had a feeble constitution, which strengthened as he grew older.[5] At fourteen, he was sent to Salamanca, as his father, who conceived great hopes from his quick and showy parts, proposed to educate him for the law, a profession which held out better inducements to the young aspirant than any other. The son, however, did not conform to these views. He showed little fondness for books, and, after loitering away two years at college, returned home, to the great chagrin of his parents. Yet his time had not been wholly misspent, since he had laid up a

[3] Argensola, in particular, has bestowed great pains on the *prosapia* of the house of Cortés; which he traces up, nothing doubting, to Narnes Cortés, king of Lombardy and Tuscany. Anales de Aragon (Zaragoza, 1630), pp. 621–625.—Also, Caro de Torres, Historia de las Ordenes militares (Madrid, 1629), fol. 103.

[4] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Las Casas, who knew the father, bears stronger testimony to his poverty than to his noble birth. "Un escudero," he says of him, "que yo conocí harto pobre y humilde, aunque cristiano, viejo *y dizen que hidalgo*." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27.

[5] [His parents had cast lots to decide which of the apostles should be chosen as his patron saint. The lot fell upon Peter, which explains the especial devotion which Cortés professed, through his whole life, to that saint, to whose watchful care he attributed the improvement in his health. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. ii. p. 4.]

little store of Latin, and learned to write good prose, and even verses "of some estimation, considering"—as an old writer quaintly remarks—"Cortés as the author." [6] He now passed his days in the idle, unprofitable manner of one who, too wilful to be guided by others, proposes no object to himself. His buoyant spirits were continually breaking out in troublesome frolics and capricious humors, quite at variance with the orderly habits of his father's household. He showed a particular inclination for the military profession, or rather for the life of adventure to which in those days it was sure to lead. And when, at the age of seventeen, he proposed to enroll himself under the banners of the Great Captain, his parents, probably thinking a life of hardship and hazard abroad preferable to one of idleness at home, made no objection.

The youthful cavalier, however, hesitated whether to seek his fortunes under that victorious chief, or in the New World, where gold as well as glory was to be won, and where the very dangers had a mystery and romance in them inexpressibly fascinating to a youthful fancy. It was in this direction, accordingly, that the hot spirits of that day found a vent, especially from that part of the country where Cortés lived, the neighborhood of Seville and Cadiz, the focus of nautical enterprise. He decided on this latter course, and

[6] Argensola, Anales, p. 220.—Las Casas and Bernal Diaz both state that he was Bachelor of Laws at Salamanca. (Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.—Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 203.) The degree was given probably in later life, when the University might feel a pride in claiming him among her sons.

an opportunity offered in the splendid armament fitted out under Don Nicolas de Ovando, successor to Columbus. An unlucky accident defeated the purpose of Cortés.[7]

As he was scaling a high wall, one night, which gave him access to the apartment of a lady with whom he was engaged in an intrigue, the stones gave way, and he was thrown down with much violence and buried under the ruins. A severe contusion, though attended with no other serious consequences, confined him to his bed till after the departure of the fleet.[8]

Two years longer he remained at home, profiting little, as it would seem, from the lesson he had received. At length he availed himself of another opportunity presented by the departure of a small squadron of vessels bound to the Indian islands. He was nineteen years of age when he bade adieu to his native shores in 1504,—the same year in which Spain lost the best and greatest in her long line of princes, Isabella the Catholic.

The vessel in which Cortés sailed was commanded by one Alonso Quintero. The fleet touched at the Canaries, as was common in the outward passage. While the other vessels were detained there taking in supplies, Quintero secretly stole out by night from the islands, with the design of reaching Hispaniola and securing the market before the arrival of his companions. A furious storm which he encountered, however, dismasted

[7] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 1.

[8] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Ibid.—Argensola states the cause of his detention concisely enough: "Suspendió el viaje, *por enamorado y por quartanario.*" Anales, p. 621.

his ship, and he was obliged to return to port and refit. The convoy consented to wait for their unworthy partner, and after a short detention they all sailed in company again. But the faithless Quintero, as they drew near the islands, availed himself once more of the darkness of the night, to leave the squadron with the same purpose as before. Unluckily for him, he met with a succession of heavy gales and head-winds, which drove him from his course, and he wholly lost his reckoning. For many days the vessel was tossed about, and all on board were filled with apprehensions, and no little indignation against the author of their calamities. At length they were cheered one morning with the sight of a white dove, which, wearied by its flight, lighted on the topmast. The biographers of Cortés speak of it as a miracle.[9] Fortunately it was no miracle, but a very natural occurrence, showing incontestably that they were near land. In a short time, by taking the direction of the bird's flight, they reached the island of Hispaniola; and, on coming into port, the worthy master had the satisfaction to find his companions arrived before him, and their cargoes already sold.[10]

Immediately on landing, Cortés repaired to the house of the governor, to whom he had been per-

[9] Some thought it was the Holy Ghost in the form of this dove. "Sanctum esse Spiritum, qui, in illius alitis specie, ut mœstos et afflictos solaretur, venire erat dignatus" (De Rebus gestis, MS.); a conjecture which seems very reasonable to Pizarro y Orellana, since the expedition was to "redound so much to the spread of the Catholic faith, and the Castilian monarchy"! Varones ilustres, p. 70.

[10] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 2.

sonally known in Spain. Ovando was absent on an expedition into the interior, but the young man was kindly received by the secretary, who assured him there would be no doubt of his obtaining a liberal grant of land to settle on. "But I came to get gold," replied Cortés, "not to till the soil, like a peasant."

On the governor's return, Cortés consented to give up his roving thoughts, at least for a time, as the other labored to convince him that he would be more likely to realize his wishes from the slow, indeed, but sure, returns of husbandry, where the soil and the laborers were a free gift to the planter, than by taking his chance in the lottery of adventure, in which there were so many blanks to a prize. He accordingly received a grant of land, with a *repartimiento* of Indians, and was appointed notary of the town or settlement of Açua. His graver pursuits, however, did not prevent his indulgence of the amorous propensities which belong to the sunny clime where he was born; and this frequently involved him in affairs of honor, from which, though an expert swordsman, he carried away scars that accompanied him to his grave.[11] He occasionally, moreover, found the means of breaking up the monotony of his way of life by engaging in the military expeditions which, under the command of Ovando's lieutenant, Diego Velasquez, were employed to suppress the insurrections of the natives. In this school the young adventurer first studied the wild tactics of Indian warfare; he became familiar with toil and danger,

[11] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 203.

and with those deeds of cruelty which have too often, alas! stained the bright scutcheons of the Castilian chivalry in the New World. He was only prevented by illness—a most fortunate one, on this occasion—from embarking in Nicuessa's expedition, which furnished a tale of woe not often matched in the annals of Spanish discovery. Providence reserved him for higher ends.

At length, in 1511, when Velasquez undertook the conquest of Cuba, Cortés willingly abandoned his quiet life for the stirring scenes there opened, and took part in the expedition. He displayed, throughout the invasion, an activity and courage that won him the approbation of the commander; while his free and cordial manners, his good humor and lively sallies of wit, made him the favorite of the soldiers. "He gave little evidence," says a contemporary, "of the great qualities which he afterwards showed." It is probable these qualities were not known to himself; while to a common observer his careless manners and jocund repartees might well seem incompatible with anything serious or profound; as the real depth of the current is not suspected under the light play and sunny sparkling of the surface.[12]

After the reduction of the island, Cortés seems to have been held in great favor by Velasquez, now appointed its governor. According to Las Casas, he was made one of his secretaries.[13] He still re-

[12] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 3, 4.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27.

[13] Hist. de las Indias, MS., loc. cit.—"Res omnes arduas difficilesque per Cortesium, quem in dies magis magisque amplectebatur,

tained the same fondness for gallantry, for which his handsome person afforded obvious advantages, but which had more than once brought him into trouble in earlier life. Among the families who had taken up their residence in Cuba was one of the name of Xuarez, from Granada in Old Spain. It consisted of a brother, and four sisters remarkable for their beauty. With one of them, named Catalina, the susceptible heart of the young soldier became enamored.[14] How far the intimacy was carried is not quite certain. But it appears he gave his promise to marry her,—a promise which, when the time came, and reason, it may be, had got the better of passion, he showed no alacrity in keeping. He resisted, indeed, all remonstrances to this effect, from the lady's family, backed by the governor, and somewhat sharpened, no doubt, in the latter by the particular interest he took in one of the fair sisters, who is said not to have repaid it with ingratitude.

Whether the rebuke of Velasquez or some other cause of disgust rankled in the breast of Cortés, he now became cold towards his patron, and connected himself with a disaffected party tolerably numerous in the island. They were in the habit of meeting at his house and brooding over their causes of discontent, chiefly founded, it would appear, on

Velasquius agit. Ex eo ducis favore et gratia magna Cortesio invidia est orta." De Rebus gestis, MS.

[14] Solís has found a patent of nobility for this lady also,—"doncella noble y recatada." (Historia de la Conquista de Méjico (Paris, 1838), lib. 1, cap. 9.) Las Casas treats her with less ceremony: "Una hermana de *un* Juan Xuarez, *gente pobre*." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 5, cap. 17.

what they conceived an ill requital of their services in the distribution of lands and offices. It may well be imagined that it could have been no easy task for the ruler of one of these colonies, however discreet and well intentioned, to satisfy the indefinite cravings of speculators and adventurers, who swarmed, like so many famished harpies, in the track of discovery in the New World.[15]

The malecontents determined to lay their grievances before the higher authorities in Hispaniola, from whom Velasquez had received his commission. The voyage was one of some hazard, as it was to be made in an open boat, across an arm of the sea eighteen leagues wide; and they fixed on Cortés, with whose fearless spirit they were well acquainted, as the fittest man to undertake it. The conspiracy got wind, and came to the governor's ears before the departure of the envoy, whom he instantly caused to be seized, loaded with fetters, and placed in strict confinement. It is even said he would have hung him, but for the interposition of his friends.[16] The fact is not incredible. The governors of these little territories, having entire control over the fortunes of their subjects, enjoyed an authority far more despotic than that of the sovereign himself. They were generally men of rank and personal consideration; their distance from the mother-country withdrew their conduct from searching scrutiny, and, when that did occur, they usually had interest and means of corruption

[15] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Memorial de Benito Martinez, Capellan de D. Velasquez, contra H. Cortés, MS.

[16] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.

at command sufficient to shield them from punishment. The Spanish colonial history, in its earlier stages, affords striking instances of the extraordinary assumption and abuse of powers by these petty potentates; and the sad fate of Vasquez Nuñez de Balboa, the illustrious discoverer of the Pacific, though the most signal, is by no means a solitary example, that the greatest services could be requited by persecution and an ignominious death.

The governor of Cuba, however, although irascible and suspicious in his nature, does not seem to have been vindictive, nor particularly cruel. In the present instance, indeed, it may well be doubted whether the blame would not be more reasonably charged on the unfounded expectations of his followers than on himself.

Cortés did not long remain in durance. He contrived to throw back one of the bolts of his fetters, and, after extricating his limbs, succeeded in forcing open a window with the irons so as to admit of his escape. He was lodged on the second floor of the building, and was able to let himself down to the pavement without injury, and unobserved. He then made the best of his way to a neighboring church, where he claimed the privilege of sanctuary.

Velasquez, though incensed at his escape, was afraid to violate the sanctity of the place by employing force. But he stationed a guard in the neighborhood, with orders to seize the fugitive if he should forget himself so far as to leave the sanctuary. In a few days this happened. As

Cortés was carelessly standing without the walls in front of the building, an *alguacil* suddenly sprang on him from behind and pinioned his arms, while others rushed in and secured him. This man, whose name was Juan Escudero, was afterwards hung by Cortés for some offence in New Spain.[17]

The unlucky prisoner was again put in irons, and carried on board a vessel to sail the next morning for Hispaniola, there to undergo his trial. Fortune favored him once more. He succeeded, after much difficulty and no little pain, in passing his feet through the rings which shackled them. He then came cautiously on deck, and, covered by the darkness of the night, stole quietly down the side of the ship into a boat that lay floating below. He pushed off from the vessel with as little noise as possible. As he drew near the shore, the stream became rapid and turbulent. He hesitated to trust his boat to it, and, as he was an excellent swimmer, prepared to breast it himself, and boldly plunged into the water. The current was strong, but the arm of a man struggling for life was stronger; and, after buffeting the waves till he was nearly exhausted, he succeeded in gaining a landing; when he sought refuge in the same sanctuary which had protected him before. The facility with which Cortés a second time effected his escape may lead one to doubt the fidelity of his guards; who perhaps looked on him as the victim of persecution, and felt the influence of those popular manners

[17] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., loc. cit.—Memorial de Martinez, MS.

which seem to have gained him friends in every society into which he was thrown.[18]

For some reason not explained,—perhaps from policy,—he now relinquished his objections to the marriage with Catalina Xuarez. He thus secured the good offices of her family. Soon afterwards the governor himself relented, and became reconciled to his unfortunate enemy. A strange story is told in connection with this event. It is said his proud spirit refused to accept the proffers of reconciliation made him by Velasquez; and that one evening, leaving the sanctuary, he presented himself unexpectedly before the latter in his own quarters, when on a military excursion at some distance from the capital. The governor, startled by the sudden apparition of his enemy completely armed before him, with some dismay inquired the meaning of it. Cortés answered by insisting on a full explanation of his previous conduct. After some hot discussion the interview terminated amicably; the parties embraced, and, when a messenger arrived to announce the escape of Cortés, he found him in the apartments of his Excellency, where, having retired to rest, both were actually sleeping in the same bed! The anecdote is repeated without distrust by more than one biographer of Cortés.[19] It is not very probable, however,

[18] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.—Herrera tells a silly story of his being unable to swim, and throwing himself on a plank, which, after being carried out to sea, was washed ashore with him at flood tide. Hist. general, dec. 1, lib. 9, cap. 8.

[19] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.—"Cœnat cubatque Cortesius cum Velasquio eodem in lecto. Qui postero die fugæ Cortesii nuntius venerat, Velasquium et Cortesium juxta accubantes intuitus, miratur." De Rebus gestis, MS.

that a haughty, irascible man like Velasquez should have given such uncommon proofs of condescension and familiarity to one, so far beneath him in station, with whom he had been so recently in deadly feud; nor, on the other hand, that Cortés should have had the silly temerity to brave the lion in his den, where a single nod would have sent him to the gibbet,—and that, too, with as little compunction or fear of consequences as would have attended the execution of an Indian slave.[20]

The reconciliation with the governor, however brought about, was permanent. Cortés, though not re-established in the office of secretary, received a liberal *repartimiento* of Indians, and an ample territory in the neighborhood of St. Jago, of which he was soon after made *alcalde*. He now lived almost wholly on his estate, devoting himself to agriculture with more zeal than formerly. He stocked his plantation with different kinds of cattle, some of which were first introduced by him into Cuba.[21] He wrought, also, the gold-mines which fell to his share, and which in this island promised better returns than those in Hispaniola. By this course of industry he found himself, in a few years, master of some two or three thousand *castellanos,* a large sum for one in his situation.

[20] Las Casas, who remembered Cortés at this time "so poor and lowly that he would have gladly received any favor from the least of Velasquez' attendants," treats the story of the bravado with contempt. "Por lo qual si él [Velasquez] sintiera de Cortés una puncta de alfiler de cerviguillo ó presuncion, ó lo ahorcara ó á lo menos lo echara de la tierra y lo sumiera en ella sin que alzara cabeza en su vida." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27.

[21] "Pecuariam primus quoque habuit, in insulamque induxit, omni pecorum genere ex Hispania petito." De Rebus gestis, MS.

"God, who alone knows at what cost of Indian lives it was obtained," exclaims Las Casas, "will take account of it!" [22] His days glided smoothly away in these tranquil pursuits, and in the society of his beautiful wife, who, however ineligible as a connection, from the inferiority of her condition, appears to have fulfilled all the relations of a faithful and affectionate partner. Indeed, he was often heard to say at this time, as the good bishop above quoted remarks, "that he lived as happily with her as if she had been the daughter of a duchess." Fortune gave him the means in after-life of verifying the truth of his assertion.[23]

Such was the state of things, when Alvarado returned with the tidings of Grijalva's discoveries and the rich fruits of his traffic with the natives. The news spread like wildfire throughout the island; for all saw in it the promise of more important results than any hitherto obtained. The governor, as already noticed, resolved to follow up the track of discovery with a more considerable armament; and he looked around for a proper person to share the expense of it and to take the command.

Several hidalgos presented themselves, whom, from want of proper qualifications, or from his distrust of their assuming an independence of their employer, he, one after another, rejected. There were two persons in St. Jago in whom he placed

[22] "Los que por sacarle el oro muriéron Dios abrá tenido mejor cuenta que yo." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 27. The text is a free translation.

[23] "Estando conmigo, me lo dixo que estava tan contento con ella como si fuera hija de una Duquessa." Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 4.

great confidence,—Amador de Lares, the *contador,* or royal treasurer,[24] and his own secretary, Andres de Duero. Cortés was also in close intimacy with both these persons; and he availed himself of it to prevail on them to recommend him as a suitable person to be intrusted with the expedition. It is said he reinforced the proposal by promising a liberal share of the proceeds of it. However this may be, the parties urged his selection by the governor with all the eloquence of which they were capable. That officer had had ample experience of the capacity and courage of the candidate. He knew, too, that he had acquired a fortune which would enable him to co-operate materially in fitting out the armament. His popularity in the island would speedily attract followers to his standard.[25] All past animosities had long since been buried in oblivion, and the confidence he was now to repose in him would insure his fidelity and gratitude. He lent a willing ear, therefore, to the recommendation of his counsellors, and, sending for Cortés, announced his purpose of making him Captain-General of the Armada.[26]

Cortés had now attained the object of his wishes,—the object for which his soul had panted ever

[24] The treasurer used to boast he had passed some two-and-twenty years in the wars of Italy. He was a shrewd personage, and Las Casas, thinking that country a slippery school for morals, warned the governor, he says, more than once "to beware of the twenty-two years in Italy." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.

[25] "Si él no fuera por Capitan, que no fuera la tercera parte de la gente que con él fué." Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS. (Coruña, 30 de Abril, 1520).

[26] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 19.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 7.—Las Casas, Hist. general de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 113.

since he had set foot in the New World. He was no longer to be condemned to a life of mercenary drudgery, nor to be cooped up within the precincts of a petty island; but he was to be placed on a new and independent theatre of action, and a boundless prospective was opened to his view, which might satisfy not merely the wildest cravings of avarice, but, to a bold, aspiring spirit like his, the far more importunate cravings of ambition. He fully appreciated the importance of the late discoveries, and read in them the existence of the great empire in the far West, dark hints of which had floated, from time to time, to the Islands, and of which more certain glimpses had been caught by those who had reached the continent. This was the country intimated to the " Great Admiral " in his visit to Honduras in 1502, and which he might have reached had he held on a northern course, instead of striking to the south in quest of an imaginary strait. As it was, " he had but opened the gate," to use his own bitter expression, " for others to enter." The time had at length come when they were to enter it; and the young adventurer, whose magic lance was to dissolve the spell which had so long hung over these mysterious regions, now stood ready to assume the enterprise.

From this hour the deportment of Cortés seemed to undergo a change. His thoughts, instead of evaporating in empty levities or idle flashes of merriment, were wholly concentrated on the great object to which he was devoted. His elastic spirits were shown in cheering and stimulating the companions of his toilsome duties, and he was roused

to a generous enthusiasm, of which even those who knew him best had not conceived him capable. He applied at once all the money in his possession to fitting out the armament. He raised more by the mortgage of his estates, and by giving his obligations to some wealthy merchants of the place, who relied for their reimbursement on the success of the expedition; and, when his own credit was exhausted, he availed himself of that of his friends.

The funds thus acquired he expended in the purchase of vessels, provisions, and military stores, while he invited recruits by offers of assistance to such as were too poor to provide for themselves, and by the additional promise of a liberal share of the anticipated profits.[27]

All was now bustle and excitement in the little town of St. Jago. Some were busy in refitting the vessels and getting them ready for the voyage; some in providing naval stores; others in converting their own estates into money in order to equip themselves; every one seemed anxious to contribute in some way or other to the success of the expedition. Six ships, some of them of a large size, had already been procured; and three hundred recruits enrolled themselves in the course of a few days, eager to seek their fortunes under the banner of this daring and popular chieftain.

How far the governor contributed towards the expenses of the outfit is not very clear. If the

[27] Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Probanza en la Villa Segura, MS. (4 de Oct., 1520).

friends of Cortés are to be believed, nearly the whole burden fell on him; since, while he supplied the squadron without remuneration, the governor sold many of his own stores at an exorbitant profit.[28] Yet it does not seem probable that Velasquez, with such ample means at his command, should have thrown on his deputy the burden of the expedition, nor that the latter—had he done so—could have been in a condition to meet these expenses, amounting, as we are told, to more than twenty thousand gold ducats. Still it cannot be denied that an ambitious man like Cortés, who was to reap all the glory of the enterprise, would very naturally be less solicitous to count the gains of it, than his employer, who, inactive at home, and having no laurels to win, must look on the pecuniary profits as his only recompense. The question gave rise, some years later, to a furious litigation between the parties, with which it is not necessary at present to embarrass the reader.

It is due to Velasquez to state that the instructions delivered by him for the conduct of the ex-

[28] The letter from the Municipality of Vera Cruz, after stating that Velasquez bore only one-third of the original expense, adds, "Y sepan Vras. Magestades que la mayor parte de la dicha tercia parte que el dicho Diego Velasquez gastó en hacer la dicha armada fué emplear sus dineros en vinos y en ropas, y en otras cosas de poco valor para nos lo vender acá en mucha mas cantidad de lo que á él le costó, por manera que podemos decir que entre nosotros los Españoles vasallos de Vras. Reales Altezas ha hecho Diego Velasquez su rescate y granosea de sus dineros cobrandolos muy bien." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) Puertocarrero and Montejo, also, in their depositions taken in Spain, both speak of Cortés' having furnished two-thirds of the cost of the flotilla. (Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—Declaracion de Montejo, MS. (29 de Abril, 1520).) The letter from Vera Cruz, however, was prepared under the eye of Cortés; and the last two were his confidential officers.

pedition cannot be charged with a narrow or mercenary spirit. The first object of the voyage was to find Grijalva, after which the two commanders were to proceed in company together. Reports had been brought back by Cordova, on his return from the first visit to Yucatan, that six Christians were said to be lingering in captivity in the interior of the country. It was supposed they might belong to the party of the unfortunate Nicuessa, and orders were given to find them out, if possible, and restore them to liberty. But the great object of the expedition was barter with the natives. In pursuing this, special care was to be taken that they should receive no wrong, but be treated with kindness and humanity. Cortés was to bear in mind, above all things, that the object which the Spanish monarch had most at heart was the conversion of the Indians. He was to impress on them the grandeur and goodness of his royal master, to invite them "to give in their allegiance to him, and to manifest it by regaling him with such comfortable presents of gold, pearls, and precious stones as, by showing their own good will, would secure his favor and protection." He was to make an accurate survey of the coast, sounding its bays and inlets for the benefit of future navigators. He was to acquaint himself with the natural products of the country, with the character of its different races, their institutions and progress in civilization; and he was to send home minute accounts of all these, together with such articles as he should obtain in his intercourse with them. Finally, he was to take *the most careful care* to omit nothing that

might redound to the service of God or his sovereign.[29]

Such was the general tenor of the instructions given to Cortés; and they must be admitted to provide for the interests of science and humanity, as well as for those which had reference only to a commercial speculation. It may seem strange, considering the discontent shown by Velasquez with his former captain, Grijalva, for not colonizing, that no directions should have been given to that effect here. But he had not yet received from Spain the warrant for investing his agents with such powers; and that which had been obtained from the Hieronymite fathers in Hispaniola conceded only the right to traffic with the natives. The commission at the same time recognized the authority of Cortés as Captain-General of the expedition.[30]

[29] The instrument, in the original Castilian, will be found in Appendix, No. 5. It is often referred to by writers who never saw it, as the Agreement between Cortés and Velasquez. It is, in fact, only the instructions given by this latter to his officer, who was no party to it.

[30] Declaracion de Puertocarrero, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 7.—Velasquez soon after obtained from the crown authority to colonize the new countries, with the title of *adelantado* over them. The instrument was dated at Barcelona, Nov. 13th, 1518. (Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 8.) Empty privileges! Las Casas gives a caustic etymology of the title of *adelantado,* so often granted to the Spanish discoverers. "Adelantados porque se adelantaran en hazer males y daños tan gravísimos á gentes pacíficas." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 117.

CHAPTER III

JEALOUSY OF VELASQUEZ—CORTÉS EMBARKS—EQUIPMENT OF HIS FLEET — HIS PERSON AND CHARACTER—RENDEZVOUS AT HAVANA—STRENGTH OF HIS ARMAMENT

1519

THE importance given to Cortés by his new position, and, perhaps, a somewhat more lofty bearing, gradually gave uneasiness to the naturally suspicious temper of Velasquez, who became apprehensive that his officer, when away where he would have the power, might also have the inclination, to throw off his dependence on him altogether. An accidental circumstance at this time heightened these suspicions. A mad fellow, his jester, one of those crack-brained wits—half wit, half fool—who formed in those days a common appendage to every great man's establishment, called out to the governor, as he was taking his usual walk one morning with Cortés towards the port, "Have a care, master Velasquez, or we shall have to go a-hunting, some day or other, after this same captain of ours!" "Do you hear what the rogue says?" exclaimed the governor to his companion. "Do not heed him," said Cortés: "he is a saucy knave, and deserves a good whipping."

The words sank deep, however, in the mind of Velasquez,—as, indeed, true jests are apt to stick.

There were not wanting persons about his Excellency who fanned the latent embers of jealousy into a blaze. These worthy gentlemen, some of them kinsmen of Velasquez, who probably felt their own deserts somewhat thrown into the shade by the rising fortunes of Cortés, reminded the governor of his ancient quarrel with that officer, and of the little probability that affronts so keenly felt at the time could ever be forgotten. By these and similar suggestions, and by misconstructions of the present conduct of Cortés, they wrought on the passions of Velasquez to such a degree that he resolved to intrust the expedition to other hands.[1]

He communicated his design to his confidential advisers, Lares and Duero, and these trusty personages reported it without delay to Cortés, although, "to a man of half his penetration," says Las Casas, "the thing would have been readily divined from the governor's altered demeanor." [2] The two functionaries advised their friend to expedite matters as much as possible, and to lose no time in getting his fleet ready for sea, if he would retain the command of it. Cortés showed the same prompt decision on this occasion which more than

[1] "Deterrebat," says the anonymous biographer, "eum Cortesii natura imperii avida, fiducia sui ingens, et nimius sumptus in classe parandâ. Timere itaque Velasquius cœpit, si Cortesius cum eâ classe iret, nihil ad se vel honoris vel lucri rediturum." De Rebus gestis, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 19.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.

[2] "Cortés no avia menester mas para entendello de mirar el gesto á Diego Velasquez segun su astuta viveza y mundana sabiduría." Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.

once afterwards in a similar crisis gave the direction to his destiny.

He had not yet got his complement of men, nor of vessels, and was very inadequately provided with supplies of any kind. But he resolved to weigh anchor that very night. He waited on his officers, informed them of his purpose, and probably of the cause of it; and at midnight, when the town was hushed in sleep, they all went quietly on board, and the little squadron dropped down the bay. First, however, Cortés had visited the person whose business it was to supply the place with meat, and relieved him of all his stock on hand, notwithstanding his complaint that the city must suffer for it on the morrow, leaving him, at the same time, in payment, a massive gold chain of much value, which he wore round his neck.[3]

Great was the amazement of the good citizens of St. Jago when, at dawn, they saw that the fleet, which they knew was so ill prepared for the voyage, had left its moorings and was busily getting under way. The tidings soon came to the ears of his Excellency, who, springing from his bed, hastily dressed himself, mounted his horse, and, followed by his retinue, galloped down to the quay. Cortés, as soon as he descried their approach, entered an armed boat, and came within speaking-distance of the shore. "And is it thus you part from me?" exclaimed Velasquez; "a courteous

[3] Las Casas had the story from Cortés' own mouth. Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 7.—De Rebus gestis, MS.

way of taking leave, truly!" "Pardon me," answered Cortés; "time presses, and there are some things that should be done before they are even thought of. Has your Excellency any commands?" But the mortified governor had no commands to give; and Cortés, politely waving his hand, returned to his vessel, and the little fleet instantly made sail for the port of Macaca, about fifteen leagues distant. (November 18, 1518.) Velasquez rode back to his house to digest his chagrin as he best might; satisfied, probably, that he had made at least two blunders,—one in appointing Cortés to the command, the other in attempting to deprive him of it. For, if it be true that by giving our confidence by halves we can scarcely hope to make a friend, it is equally true that by withdrawing it when given we shall make an enemy.[4]

This clandestine departure of Cortés has been severely criticised by some writers, especially by

[4] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 3, cap. 12.—Solís, who follows Bernal Diaz in saying that Cortés parted openly and amicably from Velasquez, seems to consider it a great slander on the character of the former to suppose that he wanted to break with the governor so soon, when he had received so little provocation. (Conquista, lib. 1, cap. 10.) But it is not necessary to suppose that Cortés intended a rupture with his employer by this clandestine movement, but only to secure himself in the command. At all events, the text conforms in every particular to the statement of Las Casas, who, as he knew both the parties well, and resided on the island at the time, had ample means of information.*

* [Las Casas was not residing in Cuba, as Prescott supposes, when Cortés sailed. The weight of authority seems to indicate that the departure of Cortés was hasty but not clandestine. Velasquez in his report to the Emperor does not say the Conqueror of Mexico stole away.—M.]

Las Casas.[5] Yet much may be urged in vindication of his conduct. He had been appointed to the command by the voluntary act of the governor, and this had been fully ratified by the authorities of Hispaniola. He had at once devoted all his resources to the undertaking, incurring, indeed, a heavy debt in addition. He was now to be deprived of his commission, without any misconduct having been alleged or at least proved against him. Such an event must overwhelm him in irretrievable ruin, to say nothing of the friends from whom he had so largely borrowed, and the followers who had embarked their fortunes in the expedition on the faith of his commanding it. There are few persons, probably, who, under these circumstances, would have felt called tamely to acquiesce in the sacrifice of their hopes to a groundless and arbitrary whim. The most to have been expected from Cortés was that he should feel obliged to provide faithfully for the interests of his employer in the conduct of the enterprise. How far he felt the force of this obligation will appear in the sequel.

From Macaca, where Cortés laid in such stores as he could obtain from the royal farms, and which, he said, he considered as "a loan from the king," he proceeded to Trinidad; a more considerable town, on the southern coast of Cuba. Here he landed, and, erecting his standard in front of his quarters, made proclamation, with liberal offers to all who would join the expedition. Volunteers came in daily, and among them more than a hundred of Grijalva's men, just returned from their

[5] Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114.

voyage and willing to follow up the discovery under an enterprising leader. The fame of Cortés attracted, also, a number of cavaliers of family and distinction, some of whom, having accompanied Grijalva, brought much information valuable for the present expedition. Among these hidalgos may be mentioned Pedro de Alvarado and his brothers, Cristóval de Olid, Alonso de Avila, Juan Velasquez de Leon, a near relation of the governor, Alonso Hernandez de Puertocarrero, and Gonzalo de Sandoval,—all of them men who took a most important part in the Conquest. Their presence was of great moment, as giving consideration to the enterprise; and, when they entered the little camp of the adventurers, the latter turned out to welcome them amidst lively strains of music and joyous salvos of artillery.

Cortés meanwhile was active in purchasing military stores and provisions. Learning that a trading-vessel laden with grain and other commodities for the mines was off the coast, he ordered out one of his caravels to seize her and bring her into port. He paid the master in bills for both cargo and ship, and even persuaded this man, named Sedeño,* who was wealthy, to join his fortunes to the expedition. He also despatched one of his officers, Diego de Ordaz, in quest of another ship,† of which he had

* [Juan Sedeño was the richest man in the fleet. His possessions included a ship, a mare, a negro, and some cazabi bread and bacon. Bernal Diaz very properly gives a list of the horses belonging to the expedition, remarking that neither horses nor negroes could be had without great expense. (See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 23.) A horse cost from four to five hundred *pesos de oro*.—M.]

† [Bancroft (Mexico, i. p. 66) thinks Prescott has made a slight mistake as to these ships, and that Sedeño was the commander of the

tidings, with instructions to seize it in like manner, and to meet him with it off Cape St. Antonio, the westerly point of the island.[6] By this he effected another object, that of getting rid of Ordaz, who was one of the governor's household, and an inconvenient spy on his own actions.

While thus occupied, letters from Velasquez were received by the commander of Trinidad, requiring him to seize the person of Cortés and to detain him, as he had been deposed from the command of the fleet, which was given to another. This functionary communicated his instructions to the principal officers in the expedition, who counselled him not to make the attempt, as it would undoubtedly lead to a commotion among the soldiers, that might end in laying the town in ashes. Verdugo thought it prudent to conform to this advice.[7]

As Cortés was willing to strengthen himself by still further reinforcements, he ordered Alvarado with a small body of men to march across the country to the Havana,* while he himself would sail

[6] Las Casas had this, also, from the lips of Cortés in later life. "Todo esto me dixo el mismo Cortés, con otras cosas cerca dello despues de Marques; . . . reindo y mofando é con estas formales palabras, *Á la mi fée andube por allí como un gentil cosario.*" Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 115.

[7] De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 8.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 114, 115.

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second vessel. Bancroft also will have it that the standard of Cortés was made of "taffeta," not *velvet*.—M.]

* [But not across the island. There was no need for Cortés to sail round the westerly point of Cuba with his squadron. Havana, or San Cristóbal de la Habana, was then upon the south side of the island. The town where the Havana of to-day stands was not founded until 1519. Many writers besides Prescott, knowing nothing

round the westerly point of the island and meet him there with the squadron. In this port he again displayed his standard, making the usual proclamation. He caused all the large guns to be brought on shore, and, with the small arms and cross-bows, to be put in order. As there was abundance of cotton raised in this neighborhood, he had the jackets of the soldiers thickly quilted with it, for a defence against the Indian arrows, from which the troops in the former expeditions had grievously suffered. He distributed his men into eleven companies, each under the command of an experienced officer; and it was observed that, although several of the cavaliers in the service were the personal friends and even kinsmen of Velasquez, he appeared to treat them all with perfect confidence.

His principal standard was of black velvet, embroidered with gold, and emblazoned with a red cross amidst flames of blue and white, with this motto in Latin beneath: "Friends, let us follow the Cross; and under this sign, if we have faith, we shall conquer." He now assumed more state in his own person and way of living, introducing a greater number of domestics and officers into his household, and placing it on a footing becoming a man of high station. This state he maintained through the rest of his life.[8]

[8] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 24.—De Rebus gestis, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 8.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias,

of this fact, have fallen into this same error. From Trinidad to the new Habana would have been a long and difficult march for Alvarado and his party, and a long and unnecessary voyage for the fleet of Cortés.—M.]

Cortés at this time was thirty-three, or perhaps thirty-four, years of age. In stature he was rather above the middle size. His complexion was pale; and his large dark eye gave an expression of gravity to his countenance, not to have been expected in one of his cheerful temperament. His figure was slender, at least until later life; but his chest was deep, his shoulders broad, his frame muscular and well proportioned. It presented the union of agility and vigor which qualified him to excel in fencing, horsemanship, and the other generous exercises of chivalry. In his diet he was temperate, careless of what he ate, and drinking little; while to toil and privation he seemed perfectly indifferent. His dress, for he did not disdain the impression produced by such adventitious aids, was such as to set off his handsome person to advantage; neither gaudy nor striking, but rich. He wore few ornaments, and usually the same; but those were of great price. His manners, frank and soldier-like, concealed a most cool and calculating spirit. With his gayest humor there mingled a settled air of resolution, which made those who approached him feel they must obey, and which infused something like awe into the attachment of his most devoted followers. Such a combination, in which love was tempered by authority, was the one probably best calculated to inspire devotion in the rough and turbulent spirits among whom his lot was to be cast.

The character of Cortés seems to have under-

MS., cap. 115.—The legend on the standard was, doubtless, suggested by that on the *labarum*,—the sacred banner of Constantine.

gone some change with change of circumstances; or, to speak more correctly, the new scenes in which he was placed called forth qualities which before lay dormant in his bosom. There are some hardy natures that require the heats of excited action to unfold their energies; like the plants which, closed to the mild influence of a temperate latitude, come to their full growth, and give forth their fruits, only in the burning atmosphere of the tropics. Such is the portrait left to us by his contemporaries of this remarkable man; the instrument selected by Providence to scatter terror among the barbarian monarchs of the Western World, and lay their empires in the dust.[9]

Before the preparations were fully completed at the Havana, the commander of the place, Don Pedro Barba, received despatches from Velasquez ordering him to apprehend Cortés and to prevent the departure of his vessels; while another epistle from the same source was delivered to Cortés himself, requesting him to postpone his voyage till the governor could communicate with him, as he proposed, in person. "Never," exclaims Las Casas, "did I see so little knowledge of affairs shown, as in this letter of Diego Velasquez,—that he should have imagined that a man who had so recently put such an affront on him would defer his departure at his bidding!"[10] It was, indeed, hoping to stay

[9] The most minute notices of the person and habits of Cortés are to be gathered from the narrative of the old cavalier Bernal Diaz, who served so long under him, and from Gomara, the general's chaplain. See in particular the last chapter of Gomara's Crónica, and cap. 203 of the Hist. de la Conquista.

[10] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 115.

the flight of the arrow by a word, after it had left the bow.

The Captain-General, however, during his short stay, had entirely conciliated the good will of Barba. And, if that officer had had the inclination, he knew he had not the power, to enforce his principal's orders, in the face of a resolute soldiery, incensed at this ungenerous persecution of their commander, and "all of whom," in the words of the honest chronicler who bore part in the expedition, "officers and privates, would have cheerfully laid down their lives for him." [11] Barba contented himself, therefore, with explaining to Velasquez the impracticability of the attempt, and at the same time endeavored to tranquillize his apprehensions by asserting his own confidence in the fidelity of Cortés. To this the latter added a communication of his own, couched "in the soft terms he knew so well how to use," [12] in which he implored his Excellency to rely on his devotion to his interests, and concluded with the comfortable assurance that he and the whole fleet, God willing, would sail on the following morning.

Accordingly, on the 10th of February, 1519, the little squadron got under way, and directed its course towards Cape St. Antonio, the appointed place of rendezvous. When all were brought together, the vessels were found to be eleven in number; one of them, in which Cortés himself went, was of a hundred tons' burden, three others were from seventy to eighty tons; the remainder were

[11] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 24.
[12] Ibid., loc. cit.

caravels and open brigantines. The whole was put under the direction of Antonio de Alaminos, as chief pilot; a veteran navigator, who had acted as pilot to Columbus in his last voyage, and to Cordova and Grijalva in the former expeditions to Yucatan.

Landing on the Cape and mustering his forces, Cortés found they amounted to one hundred and ten mariners, five hundred and fifty-three soldiers, including thirty-two crossbowmen, and thirteen arquebusiers, besides two hundred Indians of the island, and a few Indian women for menial offices. He was provided with ten heavy guns, four lighter pieces called falconets, and with a good supply of ammunition.[13] He had besides sixteen horses. They were not easily procured; for the difficulty of transporting them across the ocean in the flimsy craft of that day made them rare and incredibly dear in the Islands.[14] But Cortés rightfully esti-

[13] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 26.—There is some discrepancy among authorities in regard to the numbers of the army. The Letter from Vera Cruz, which should have been exact, speaks in round terms of only four hundred soldiers. (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.) Velasquez himself, in a communication to the Chief Judge of Hispaniola, states the number at six hundred. (Carta de Diego Velasquez al Lic. Figueroa, MS.) I have adopted the estimates of Bernal Diaz, who, in his long service, seems to have become intimately acquainted with every one of his comrades, their persons, and private history.

[14] Incredibly dear indeed, since, from the statements contained in the depositions at Villa Segura, it appears that the cost of the horses for the expedition was from four to five hundred *pesos de oro* each! "Si saben que de caballos que el dicho Señor Capitan General Hernando Cortés ha comprado para servir en la dicha Conquista, que son diez é ocho, que le han costado á quatrocientos cinquenta é á quinientos pesos ha pagado, é que deve mas de ocho mil pesos de oro dellos." (Probanza en Villa Segura, MS.) The estimation of these horses is sufficiently shown by the minute information Bernal Diaz

mated the importance of cavalry, however small in number, both for their actual service in the field, and for striking terror into the savages. With so paltry a force did he enter on a conquest which even his stout heart must have shrunk from attempting with such means, had he but foreseen half its real difficulties!

Before embarking, Cortés addressed his soldiers in a short but animated harangue. He told them they were about to enter on a noble enterprise, one that would make their name famous to after-ages. He was leading them to countries more vast and opulent than any yet visited by Europeans. "I hold out to you a glorious prize," continued the orator, "but it is to be won by incessant toil. Great things are achieved only by great exertions, and glory was never the reward of sloth.[15] If I have labored hard and staked my all on this undertaking, it is for the love of that renown which is the noblest recompense of man. But, if any among you covet riches more, be but true to me, as I will be true to you and to the occasion, and I will make you masters of such as our countrymen have never dreamed of! You are few in number, but strong in resolution; and, if this does not falter, doubt not but that the Almighty, who has never deserted the Spaniard in his contest with the infi-

has thought proper to give of every one of them; minute enough for the pages of a sporting calendar. See Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 23.

[15] "Io vos propongo grandes premios, mas embueltos en grandes trabajos; pero la virtud no quiere oçiosidad." (Gomara, Crónica, cap. 9.) It is the thought so finely expressed by Thomson:

"For sluggard's brow the laurel never grows;
Renown is not the child of indolent repose."

del, will shield you, though encompassed by a cloud of enemies; for your cause is a *just cause,* and you are to fight under the banner of the Cross. Go forward, then," he concluded, " with alacrity and confidence, and carry to a glorious issue the work so auspiciously begun." [16]

The rough eloquence of the general, touching the various chords of ambition, avarice, and religious zeal, sent a thrill through the bosoms of his martial audience; and, receiving it with acclamations, they seemed eager to press forward under a chief who was to lead them not so much to battle, as to triumph.

Cortés was well satisfied to find his own enthusiasm so largely shared by his followers. Mass was then celebrated with the solemnities usual with the Spanish navigators when entering on their voyages of discovery. The fleet was placed under the immediate protection of St. Peter, the patron saint of Cortés, and, weighing anchor, took its departure on the eighteenth day of February, 1519, for the coast of Yucatan.[17]

[16] The text is a very condensed abridgment of the original speech of Cortés,—or of his chaplain, as the case may be. See it, in Gomara, Crónica, cap. 9.

[17] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., cap. 115.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 10.—De ebus gestis, MS.—" Tantus fuit armorum apparatus," exclaims the author of the last work, " quo alterum terrarum orbem bellis Cortesius concutit; ex tam parvis opibus tantum imperium Carolo facit; aperitque omnium primus Hispanæ genti Hispaniam novam!" The author of this work is unknown. It seems to have been part of a great compilation " De Orbe Novo," written, probably, on the plan of a series of biographical sketches, as the introduction speaks of a life of Columbus preceding this of Cortés. It was composed, as it states, while many of the old Conquerors were still surviving, and is addressed to the son of Cortés. The historian, therefore, had ample means of verifying the truth of his own state-

ments, although they too often betray, in his partiality for his hero, the influence of the patronage under which the work was produced. It runs into a prolixity of detail which, however tedious, has its uses in a contemporary document. Unluckily, only the first book was finished, or, at least, has survived; terminating with the events of this chapter. It is written in Latin, in a pure and perspicuous style, and is conjectured with some plausibility to be the work of Calvet de Estrella, Chronicler of the Indies. The original exists in the Archives of Simancas, where it was discovered and transcribed by Muñoz, from whose copy that in my library was taken.

CHAPTER IV

VOYAGE TO COZUMEL—CONVERSION OF THE NATIVES—GERÓNIMO DE AGUILAR—ARMY ARRIVES AT TABASCO—GREAT BATTLE WITH THE INDIANS—CHRISTIANITY INTRODUCED

1519

ORDERS were given for the vessels to keep as near together as possible, and to take the direction of the *capitanía,* or admiral's ship, which carried a beacon-light in the stern during the night. But the weather, which had been favorable, changed soon after their departure, and one of those tempests set in which at this season are often found in the latitudes of the West Indies. It fell with terrible force on the little navy, scattering it far asunder, dismantling some of the ships, and driving them all considerably south of their proposed destination.

Cortés, who had lingered behind to convoy a disabled vessel, reached the island of Cozumel last. On landing, he learned that one of his captains, Pedro de Alvarado, had availed himself of the short time he had been there, to enter the temples, rifle them of their few ornaments, and, by his violent conduct, so far to terrify the simple natives

that they had fled for refuge into the interior of the island. Cortés, highly incensed at these rash proceedings, so contrary to the policy he had proposed, could not refrain from severely reprimanding his officer in the presence of the army. He commanded two Indian captives, taken by Alvarado, to be brought before him, and explained to them the pacific purpose of his visit. This he did through the assistance of his interpreter, Melchorejo, a native of Yucatan, who had been brought back by Grijalva, and who during his residence in Cuba had picked up some acquaintance with the Castilian. He then dismissed them loaded with presents, and with an invitation to their countrymen to return to their homes without fear of further annoyance. This humane policy succeeded. The fugitives, reassured, were not slow in coming back; and an amicable intercourse was established, in which Spanish cutlery and trinkets were exchanged for the gold ornaments of the natives; a traffic in which each party congratulated itself—a philosopher might think with equal reason—on outwitting the other.

The first object of Cortés was to gather tidings of the unfortunate Christians who were reported to be still lingering in captivity on the neighboring continent. From some traders in the island he obtained such a confirmation of the report that he sent Diego de Ordaz with two brigantines to the opposite coast of Yucatan, with instructions to remain there eight days. Some Indians went as messengers in the vessels, who consented to bear a letter to the captives informing them of the arrival

of their countrymen in Cozumel with a liberal ransom for their release. Meanwhile the general proposed to make an excursion to the different parts of the island, that he might give employment to the restless spirits of the soldiers, and ascertain the resources of the country.

It was poor and thinly peopled. But everywhere he recognized the vestiges of a higher civilization than what he had before witnessed in the Indian islands. The houses were some of them large, and often built of stone and lime. He was particularly struck with the temples, in which were towers constructed of the same solid materials, and rising several stories in height. In the court of one of these he was amazed by the sight of a cross, of stone and lime, about ten palms high. It was the emblem of the god of rain. Its appearance suggested the wildest conjectures, not merely to the unlettered soldiers, but subsequently to the European scholar, who speculated on the character of the races that had introduced there the sacred symbol of Christianity. But no such inference, as we shall see hereafter, could be warranted.[1] Yet it must be regarded as a curious fact that the Cross should have been venerated as the object of religious worship both in the New World and in regions of the Old where the light of Christianity had never risen.[2]

[1] See *ante*, p. 241, note 27.

[2] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 25, et seq.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 10, 15.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 115.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 6.—Martyr, De Insulis nuper inventis (Coloniæ, 1574), p. 344. —While these pages were passing through the press, but not till

The next object of Cortés was to reclaim the natives from their gross idolatry and to substitute a purer form of worship. In accomplishing this he was prepared to use force, if milder measures should be ineffectual. There was nothing which the Spanish government had more earnestly at heart than the conversion of the Indians. It forms the constant burden of their instructions, and gave to the military expeditions in this Western hemisphere somewhat of the air of a crusade. The cavalier who embarked in them entered fully into these chivalrous and devotional feelings. No doubt was entertained of the efficacy of conversion, however sudden might be the change or however violent the means. The sword was a good

two years after they were written, Mr. Stephens's important and interesting volumes appeared, containing the account of his second expedition to Yucatan. In the latter part of the work he describes his visit to Cozumel, now an uninhabited island covered with impenetrable forests. Near the shore he saw the remains of ancient Indian structures, which he conceives may possibly have been the same that met the eyes of Grijalva and Cortés, and which suggest to him some important inferences. He is led into further reflections on the existence of the cross as a symbol of worship among the islanders. (Incidents of Travel in Yucatan (New York, 1843), vol. ii. chap. 20.) As the discussion of these matters would lead me too far from the track of our narrative, I shall take occasion to return to them hereafter, when I treat of the architectural remains of the country.* †

* [In the passages here referred to, the author has noticed various proofs of the existence of the cross as a symbol of worship among pagan nations both in the Old World and the New. The fact has been deemed a very puzzling one; yet the explanation, as traced by Dr. Brinton, is sufficiently simple: "The arms of the cross were designed to point to the cardinal points and represent the four winds, —the rain-bringers." Hence the name given to it in the Mexican language, signifying "Tree of our Life,"—a term well calculated to increase the wonderment of the Spanish discoverers. Myths of the New World, p. 96, et al.—K.]

† *Ante*, p. 239.

argument, when the tongue failed; and the spread of Mahometanism had shown that seeds sown by the hand of violence, far from perishing in the ground, would spring up and bear fruit to after-time. If this were so in a bad cause, how much more would it be true in a good one! The Spanish cavalier felt he had a high mission to accomplish as a soldier of the Cross. However unauthorized or unrighteous the war into which he had entered may seem to us, to him it was a holy war. He was in arms against the infidel. Not to care for the soul of his benighted enemy was to put his own in jeopardy. The conversion of a single soul might cover a multitude of sins. It was not for morals that he was concerned, but for *the faith*. This, though understood in its most literal and limited sense, comprehended the whole scheme of Christian morality. Whoever died in the faith, however immoral had been his life, might be said to die in the Lord. Such was the creed of the Castilian knight of that day, as imbibed from the preachings of the pulpit, from cloisters and colleges at home, from monks and missionaries abroad,—from all save one, whose devotion, kindled at a purer source, was not, alas! permitted to send forth its radiance far into the thick gloom by which he was encompassed.[3]

No one partook more fully of the feelings above described than Hernan Cortés. He was, in truth, the very mirror of the time in which he lived, re-

[3] See the biographical sketch of the good bishop Las Casas, the "Protector of the Indians," in the Postscript at the close of the present Book.

flecting its motley characteristics, its speculative devotion and practical license, but with an intensity all his own. He was greatly scandalized at the exhibition of the idolatrous practices of the people of Cozumel, though untainted, as it would seem, with human sacrifices. He endeavored to persuade them to embrace a better faith, through the agency of two ecclesiastics who attended the expedition,—the licentiate Juan Diaz and Father Bartolomé de Olmedo. The latter of these godly men afforded the rare example—rare in any age —of the union of fervent zeal with charity, while he beautifully illustrated in his own conduct the precepts which he taught. He remained with the army through the whole expedition, and by his wise and benevolent counsels was often enabled to mitigate the cruelties of the Conquerors, and to turn aside the edge of the sword from the unfortunate natives.

These two missionaries vainly labored to persuade the people of Cozumel to renounce their abominations, and to allow the Indian idols, in which the Christians recognized the true lineaments of Satan,[4] to be thrown down and demolished. The simple natives, filled with horror at the proposed profanation, exclaimed that these were the gods who sent them the sunshine and the storm, and, should any violence be offered, they would be sure to avenge it by sending their lightnings on the heads of its perpetrators.

[4] "It may have been that the devil appeared to them as he is, and left these forms stamped on their imagination, so that the imitative power of the artist reveals itself in the ugliness of the image." Solís, Conquista, p. 39.

Cortés was probably not much of a polemic. At all events, he preferred on the present occasion action to argument, and thought that the best way to convince the Indians of their error was to prove the falsehood of the prediction. He accordingly, without further ceremony, caused the venerated images to be rolled down the stairs of the great temple, amidst the groans and lamentations of the natives. An altar was hastily constructed, an image of the Virgin and Child placed over it, and mass was performed by Father Olmedo and his reverend companion for the first time within the walls of a temple in New Spain. The patient ministers tried once more to pour the light of the gospel into the benighted understandings of the islanders, and to expound the mysteries of the Catholic faith. The Indian interpreter must have afforded rather a dubious channel for the transmission of such abstruse doctrines. But they at length found favor with their auditors, who, whether overawed by the bold bearing of the invaders, or convinced of the impotence of deities that could not shield their own shrines from violation, now consented to embrace Christianity.[5]

[5] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 13.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 7.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 78.—Las Casas, whose enlightened views in religion would have done honor to the present age, insists on the futility of these forced conversions, by which it was proposed in a few days to wean men from the idolatry which they had been taught to reverence from the cradle. "The only way of doing this," he says, "is by long, assiduous, and faithful preaching, until the heathen shall gather some ideas of the true nature of the Deity and of the doctrines they are to embrace. Above all, the lives of the Christians should be such as to exemplify the truth of these doctrines, that, seeing this, the poor Indian may glorify the Father, and acknowledge him, who

While Cortés was thus occupied with the triumphs of the Cross, he received intelligence that Ordaz had returned from Yucatan without tidings of the Spanish captives. Though much chagrined, the general did not choose to postpone longer his departure from Cozumel. The fleet had been well stored with provisions by the friendly inhabitants, and, embarking his troops, Cortés, in the beginning of March, took leave of its hospitable shores. The squadron had not proceeded far, however, before a leak in one of the vessels compelled them to return to the same port. The detention was attended with important consequences; so much so, indeed, that a writer of the time discerns in it "a great mystery and a miracle." [6]

Soon after landing, a canoe with several Indians was seen making its way from the neighboring shores of Yucatan. On reaching the island, one of the men inquired, in broken Castilian, "if he were among Christians," and, being answered in the affirmative, threw himself on his knees and returned thanks to Heaven for his delivery. He was one of the unfortunate captives for whose fate so much interest had been felt. His name was Gerónimo de Aguilar,* a native of Écija, in Old

has such worshippers, for the true and only God." See the original remarks, which I quote *in extenso,* as a good specimen of the bishop's style when kindled by his subject into eloquence, in Appendix, No. 6.

[6] "Muy gran misterio y milagro de Dios." Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

* [Not long ago, a history of the Spanish Conquest of Yucatan, written in the Maya language, but in Roman letters, by a native chief, Nakuk Pech, about the year 1562, was brought to light. This account, the "Chronicle of Chicxulub," was translated by Dr. Brinton, and was published by him in the "Maya Chronicles," Philadel-

Spain, where he had been regularly educated for the Church. He had been established with the colony at Darien, and on a voyage from that place to Hispaniola, eight years previous, was wrecked near the coast of Yucatan. He escaped with several of his companions in the ship's boat, where some perished from hunger and exposure, while others were sacrificed, on their reaching land, by the cannibal natives of the peninsula. Aguilar was preserved from the same dismal fate by escaping into the interior, where he fell into the hands of a powerful cacique, who, though he spared his life, treated him at first with great rigor. The patience of the captive, however, and his singular humility, touched the better feelings of the chieftain, who would have persuaded Aguilar to take a wife among his people, but the ecclesiastic steadily refused, in obedience to his vows. This admirable constancy excited the distrust of the cacique, who put his virtue to a severe test by various temptations, and much of the same sort as those with which the devil is said to have assailed St. Anthony.[7] From all these fiery trials, however, like

[7] They are enumerated by Herrera with a minuteness which may claim at least the merit of giving a much higher notion of Aguilar's

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phia, 1882, pp. 187–259. This chronicle, from the pen of one who was almost contemporary with the Conquest, corroborates the accounts given by the Spanish historians in most particulars. It refers to Chichen Itza and Izamal as inhabited when the Spaniards descended upon the country. It is sometimes inaccurate as to details, as in this reference to Aguilar: "Thus the land was discovered by Aguilar, who was eaten by Ah Naum Ah Pat at Cuzamil in the year 1517." We know, of course, that it was another Spaniard who was eaten by Ah Naum Ah Pat. The matter is of small consequence to us, though undoubtedly important to Aguilar.—M.]

his ghostly predecessor, he came out unscorched. Continence is too rare and difficult a virtue with barbarians, not to challenge their veneration, and the practice of it has made the reputation of more than one saint in the Old as well as the New World. Aguilar was now intrusted with the care of his master's household and his numerous wives. He was a man of discretion, as well as virtue; and his counsels were found so salutary that he was consulted on all important matters. In short, Aguilar became a great man among the Indians.

It was with much regret, therefore, that his master received the proposals for his return to his countrymen, to which nothing but the rich treasure of glass beads, hawk-bells, and other jewels of like value, sent for his ransom, would have induced him to consent. When Aguilar reached the coast, there had been so much delay that the brigantines had sailed; and it was owing to the fortunate return of the fleet to Cozumel that he was enabled to join it.

On appearing before Cortés, the poor man saluted him in the Indian style, by touching the earth with his hand and carrying it to his head. The commander, raising him up, affectionately embraced him, covering him at the same time with his own cloak, as Aguilar was simply clad in the habiliments of the country, somewhat too scanty for a European eye. It was long, indeed, before

virtue than the barren generalities of the text. (Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 6–8.) The story is prettily told by Washington Irving, Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus (London, 1833), p. 263, et seq.

the tastes which he had acquired in the freedom of the forest could be reconciled to the constraints either of dress or manners imposed by the artificial forms of civilization. Aguilar's long residence in the country had familiarized him with the Mayan dialects of Yucatan, and, as he gradually revived his Castilian, he became of essential importance as an interpreter. Cortés saw the advantage of this from the first, but he could not fully estimate all the consequences that were to flow from it.[8]

The repairs of the vessels being at length completed, the Spanish commander once more took leave of the friendly natives of Cozumel, and set sail on the fourth of March. Keeping as near as possible to the coast of Yucatan, he doubled Cape Catoche, and with flowing sheets swept down the broad bay of Campeachy, fringed with the rich dye-woods which have since furnished so important an article of commerce to Europe. He passed Potonchan, where Cordova had experienced a rough reception from the natives; and soon after reached the mouth of the *Rio de Tabasco,* or *Grijalva,* in which that navigator had carried on so lucrative a traffic. Though mindful of the great object of his voyage,—the visit to the Aztec territories,—he was desirous of acquainting himself with the resources of this country, and determined to ascend the river and visit the great town on its borders.

The water was so shallow, from the accumula-

[8] Camargo, Historia de Tlascala, MS.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 347.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 29.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 115, 116.

tion of sand at the mouth of the stream, that the general was obliged to leave the ships at anchor and to embark in the boats with a part only of his forces. The banks were thickly studded with mangrove-trees, that, with their roots shooting up and interlacing one another, formed a kind of impervious screen or net-work, behind which the dark forms of the natives were seen glancing to and fro with the most menacing looks and gestures. Cortés, much surprised at these unfriendly demonstrations, so unlike what he had had reason to expect, moved cautiously up the stream. When he had reached an open place, where a large number of Indians were assembled, he asked, through his interpreter, leave to land, explaining at the same time his amicable intentions. But the Indians, brandishing their weapons, answered only with gestures of angry defiance. Though much chagrined, Cortés thought it best not to urge the matter further that evening, but withdrew to a neighboring island, where he disembarked his troops, resolved to effect a landing on the following morning.

When day broke, the Spaniards saw the opposite banks lined with a much more numerous array than on the preceding evening, while the canoes along the shore were filled with bands of armed warriors. Cortés now made his preparations for the attack. He first landed a detachment of a hundred men under Alonso de Avila, at a point somewhat lower down the stream, sheltered by a thick grove of palms, from which a road, as he knew, led to the town of Tabasco, giving orders to

his officer to march at once on the place, while he himself advanced to assault it in front.[9]

Then, embarking the remainder of his troops, Cortés crossed the river in face of the enemy; but, before commencing hostilities, that he might "act with entire regard to justice, and in obedience to the instructions of the Royal Council," [10] he first caused proclamation to be made, through the interpreter, that he desired only a free passage for his men, and that he proposed to revive the friendly relations which had formerly subsisted between his countrymen and the natives. He assured them that if blood were spilt the sin would lie on their heads, and that resistance would be useless, since he was resolved at all hazards to take up his quarters that night in the town of Tabasco. This proclamation, delivered in lofty tone, and duly recorded by the notary, was answered by the Indians —who might possibly have comprehended one word in ten of it—with shouts of defiance and a shower of arrows.[11]

[9] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 31.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 18.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 118.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 348.—There are some discrepancies between the statements of Bernal Diaz and the Letter from Vera Cruz; both by parties who were present.

[10] Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 31.

[11] "See," exclaims the Bishop of Chiapa, in his caustic vein, "the reasonableness of this 'requisition,' or, to speak more correctly, the folly and insensibility of the Royal Council, who could find, in the refusal of the Indians to receive it, a good pretext for war." (Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 118.) In another place he pronounces an animated invective against the iniquity of those who covered up hostilities under this empty form of words, the import of which was utterly incomprehensible to the barbarians. (Ibid., lib. 3, cap. 57.) The famous formula, used by the Spanish Conquerors on this occa-

Cortés, having now complied with all the requisitions of a loyal cavalier, and shifted the responsibility from his own shoulders to those of the Royal Council, brought his boats alongside of the Indian canoes. They grappled fiercely together, and both parties were soon in the water, which rose above the girdle. The struggle was not long, though desperate. The superior strength of the Europeans prevailed, and they forced the enemy back to land. Here, however, they were supported by their countrymen, who showered down darts, arrows, and blazing billets of wood on the heads of the invaders. The banks were soft and slippery, and it was with difficulty the soldiers made good their footing. Cortés lost a sandal in the mud, but continued to fight barefoot, with great exposure of his person, as the Indians, who soon singled out the leader, called to one another, "Strike at the chief!"

At length the Spaniards gained the bank, and were able to come into something like order, when they opened a brisk fire from their arquebuses and cross-bows. The enemy, astounded by the roar and flash of the fire-arms, of which they had had no experience, fell back, and retreated behind a breast-work of timber thrown across the way. The Spaniards, hot in the pursuit, soon carried these rude defences, and drove the Tabascans before

sion, was drawn up by Dr. Palacios Reubios, a man of letters, and a member of the King's council. "But I laugh at him and his letters," exclaims Oviedo, "if he thought a word of it could be comprehended by the untutored Indians!" (Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 29, cap. 7.) The regular Manifesto, *requirimiento*, may be found translated in the concluding pages of Irving's "Voyages of the Companions of Columbus."

them towards the town, where they again took shelter behind their palisades.

Meanwhile Avila had arrived from the opposite quarter, and the natives, taken by surprise, made no further attempt at resistance, but abandoned the place to the Christians. They had previously removed their families and effects. Some provisions fell into the hands of the victors, but little gold, "a circumstance," says Las Casas, "which gave them no particular satisfaction." [12] It was a very populous place. The houses were mostly of mud; the better sort of stone and lime; affording proofs in the inhabitants of a superior refinement to that found in the Islands, as their stout resistance had given evidence of superior valor.[13]

Cortés, having thus made himself master of the town, took formal possession of it for the crown of Castile. He gave three cuts with his sword on a large *ceiba*-tree which grew in the place, and proclaimed aloud that he took possession of the city in the name and behalf of the Catholic sovereigns,

[12] "Halláronlas llenas de maiz é gallinas y otros vastimentos, oro ninguno, de lo que ellos no resciviéron mucho plazer." Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.

[13] Peter Martyr gives a glowing picture of this Indian capital. "Ad fluminis ripam protentum dicunt esse oppidum, quantum non ausim dicere: mille quingentorum passuum, ait Alaminus nauclerus, et domorum quinque ac viginti millium: stringunt alij, ingens tamen fatentur et celebre. Hortis intersecantur domus, quæ sunt *egregiè lapidibus et calce fabrefactæ, maximâ industriâ et architectorum arte.*" (De Insulis, p. 349.) With his usual inquisitive spirit, he gleaned all the particulars from the old pilot Alaminos, and from two of the officers of Cortés who revisited Spain in the course of that year. Tabasco was in the neighborhood of those ruined cities of Yucatan which have lately been the theme of so much speculation. The encomiums of Martyr are not so remarkable as the apathy of other contemporary chroniclers.

and would maintain and defend the same with sword and buckler against all who should gainsay it. The same vaunting declaration was also made by the soldiers, and the whole was duly recorded and attested by the notary. This was the usual simple but chivalric form with which the Spanish cavaliers asserted the royal title to the conquered territories in the New World. It was a good title, doubtless, against the claims of any other European potentate.

The general took up his quarters that night in the court-yard of the principal temple. He posted his sentinels, and took all the precautions practised in wars with a civilized foe. Indeed, there was reason for them. A suspicious silence seemed to reign through the place and its neighborhood; and tidings were brought that the interpreter, Melchorejo, had fled, leaving his Spanish dress hanging on a tree. Cortés was disquieted by the desertion of this man, who would not only inform his countrymen of the small number of the Spaniards, but dissipate any illusions that might be entertained of their superior natures.

On the following morning, as no traces of the enemy were visible, Cortés ordered out a detachment under Alvarado, and another under Francisco de Lujo, to reconnoitre. The latter officer had not advanced a league, before he learned the position of the Indians, by their attacking him in such force that he was fain to take shelter in a large stone building, where he was closely besieged. Fortunately, the loud yells of the assailants, like most barbarous nations seeking to strike terror by their

ferocious cries, reached the ears of Alvarado and his men, who, speedily advancing to the relief of their comrades, enabled them to force a passage through the enemy. Both parties retreated, closely pursued, on the town, when Cortés, marching out to their support, compelled the Tabascans to retire.

A few prisoners were taken in this skirmish. By them Cortés found his worst apprehensions verified. The country was everywhere in arms. A force consisting of many thousands had assembled from the neighboring provinces, and a general assault was resolved on for the next day. To the general's inquiries why he had been received in so different a manner from his predecessor, Grijalva, they answered that " the conduct of the Tabascans then had given great offence to the other Indian tribes, who taxed them with treachery and cowardice; so that they had promised, on any return of the white men, to resist them in the same manner as their neighbors had done." [14]

Cortés might now well regret that he had allowed himself to deviate from the direct object of his enterprise, and to become entangled in a doubtful war which could lead to no profitable result. But it was too late to repent. He had taken the step, and had no alternative but to go forward. To retreat would dishearten his own men at the outset, impair their confidence in him as their leader, and confirm the arrogance of his foes, the tidings of whose success might precede him on his

[14] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 31, 32.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 18.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 118, 119.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 78, 79.

voyage and prepare the way for greater mortifications and defeats. He did not hesitate as to the course he was to pursue, but, calling his officers together, announced his intention to give battle the following morning.[15]

He sent back to the vessels such as were disabled by their wounds, and ordered the remainder of the forces to join the camp. Six of the heavy guns were also taken from the ships, together with all the horses. The animals were stiff and torpid from long confinement on board; but a few hours' exercise restored them to their strength and usual spirit. He gave the command of the artillery—if it may be dignified with the name—to a soldier named Mesa, who had acquired some experience as an engineer in the Italian wars. The infantry he put under the orders of Diego de Ordaz, and took charge of the cavalry himself. It consisted of some of the most valiant gentlemen of his little band, among whom may be mentioned Alvarado, Velasquez de Leon, Avila, Puertocarrero, Olid, Montejo. Having thus made all the necessary arrangements, and settled his plan of battle, he retired to rest,—but not to slumber. His feverish mind, as may well be imagined, was filled with anxiety for the morrow, which might decide the fate of his expedition; and, as was his wont on such occasions, he was frequently observed, during the night, going the rounds, and visiting the sentinels, to see that no one slept upon his post.

[15] According to Solís, who quotes the address of Cortés on the occasion, he summoned a council of his captains to advise him as to the course he should pursue. (Conquista, cap. 19.) It is possible, but I find no warrant for it anywhere.

At the first glimmering of light he mustered his army, and declared his purpose not to abide, cooped up in the town, the assault of the enemy, but to march at once against him. For he well knew that the spirits rise with action, and that the attacking party gathers a confidence from the very movement, which is not felt by the one who is passively, perhaps anxiously, awaiting the assault. The Indians were understood to be encamped on a level ground a few miles distant from the city, called the plain of Ceutla. The general commanded that Ordaz should march with the foot, including the artillery, directly across the country, and attack them in front, while he himself would fetch a circuit with the horse, and turn their flank when thus engaged, or fall upon their rear.

These dispositions being completed, the little army heard mass and then sallied forth from the wooden walls of Tabasco. It was Lady-day, the twenty-fifth of March,—long memorable in the annals of New Spain. The district around the town was checkered with patches of maize, and, on the lower level, with plantations of cacao,—supplying the beverage, and perhaps the coin, of the country, as in Mexico. These plantations, requiring constant irrigation, were fed by numerous canals and reservoirs of water, so that the country could not be traversed without great toil and difficulty. It was, however, intersected by a narrow path or causeway over which the cannon could be dragged.

The troops advanced more than a league on their laborious march, without descrying the en-

emy. The weather was sultry, but few of them were embarrassed by the heavy mail worn by the European cavaliers at that period. Their cotton jackets, thickly quilted, afforded a tolerable protection against the arrows of the Indians, and allowed room for the freedom and activity of movement essential to a life of rambling adventure in the wilderness.

At length they came in sight of the broad plains of Ceutla, and beheld the dusky lines of the enemy stretching, as far as the eye could reach, along the edge of the horizon. The Indians had shown some sagacity in the choice of their position; and, as the weary Spaniards came slowly on, floundering through the morass, the Tabascans set up their hideous battle-cries, and discharged volleys of arrows, stones, and other missiles, which rattled like hail on the shields and helmets of the assailants. Many were severely wounded before they could gain the firm ground, where they soon cleared a space for themselves, and opened a heavy fire of artillery and musketry on the dense columns of the enemy, which presented a fatal mark for the balls. Numbers were swept down at every discharge; but the bold barbarians, far from being dismayed, threw up dust and leaves to hide their losses, and, sounding their war-instruments, shot off fresh flights of arrows in return.

They even pressed closer on the Spaniards, and, when driven off by a vigorous charge, soon turned again, and, rolling back like the waves of the ocean, seemed ready to overwhelm the little band by weight of numbers. Thus cramped, the latter

had scarcely room to perform their necessary evolutions, or even to work their guns with effect.[16]

The engagement had now lasted more than an hour, and the Spaniards, sorely pressed, looked with great anxiety for the arrival of the horse—which some unaccountable impediments must have detained—to relieve them from their perilous position. At this crisis, the farthest columns of the Indian army were seen to be agitated and thrown into a disorder that rapidly spread through the whole mass. It was not long before the ears of the Christians were saluted with the cheering war-cry of "San Jago and San Pedro!" and they beheld the bright helmets and swords of the Castilian chivalry flashing back the rays of the morning sun, as they dashed through the ranks of the enemy, striking to the right and left, and scattering dismay around them. The eye of faith, indeed, could discern the patron Saint of Spain, himself, mounted on his gray war-horse, heading the rescue and trampling over the bodies of the fallen infidels![17]

The approach of Cortés had been greatly retarded by the broken nature of the ground. When he came up, the Indians were so hotly engaged that

[16] Las Casas, Hist. de las Ind., MS., lib. 3, cap. 119.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 19, 20.—Herrera, Hist. gen., dec. 2, lib. 4, cap. 11.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 350.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 33, 36.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.

[17] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—"Cortés supposed it was his own tutelar saint, St. Peter," says Pizarro y Orellana; "but the common and indubitable opinion is that it was our glorious apostle St. James, the bulwark and safeguard of our nation." (Va-

he was upon them before they observed his approach. He ordered his men to direct their lances

rones ilustres, p. 73.) "Sinner that I am," exclaims honest Bernal Diaz, in a more skeptical vein, "it was not permitted to me to see either the one or the other of the Apostles on this occasion." Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 34.*

* [The remark of Bernal Diaz is not to be taken as ironical. His faith in the same vision on subsequent occasions is expressed without demur. In the present case he recognized the rider of the gray horse as a Spanish cavalier, Francisco de Morla. It appears from the account of Andrés de Tápia, another companion of Cortés, whose narrative has been recently published, that owing to canals and other impediments, the cavalry was unable to effect the intended détour, and it therefore returned and joined the infantry. The latter, meanwhile, having seen a cavalier on a gray horse charging the Indians in their rear, supposed that the cavalry had penetrated to that quarter. Cortés, on hearing this, exclaimed, "Adelante, compañeros, que Dios es con nosotros." (Icazbalceta, Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. i.) Tápia says nothing about St. James or St. Peter, and perhaps suspected that the incident was a ruse contrived by Cortés. Generally, however, such legends seem to be sufficiently explained by the religious belief and excited imagination of the narrators. See the remarks, on this point, of Macaulay, who notices the account of Diaz, in the introduction to his lay of the Battle of the Lake Regillus.—K.] †

† [The apparition of St. James is not infrequent in the history of Spain. The apostle first appeared as a leader of the Spanish hosts in the battle of Clavijo, 846. He rode upon a white charger, and carried in his left hand a snow-white banner. In his right hand was a flashing sword. Because of his wondrous aid sixty thousand Moslems were vanquished that day by the soldiers of King Ramiro. Mariana, Book vii, chap. xiii, tells the story, and many writers accepted the legend. Unfortunately, however, careful investigation has shown that the battle itself was apocryphal.

In the tenth century he appeared again when Ramiro II defeated the great Abderahman, and as a result pilgrims innumerable flocked to the shrine of Santiago de Compostella.

Again his white horse led the Spanish cavalry when Fernando was besieging Coimbra in 1058, or thereabout, as one may read in Southey's Chronicle of the Cid.

At Xeres, in 1237, Alfonso of Castile, with fifteen hundred men, defeated a force seven times larger than his own because all men saw plainly the glorious vision. The Moors fled panic-stricken at the sight. "They could not fight against God." The instances might be multiplied.—M.]

at the faces of their opponents,[18] who, terrified at the monstrous apparition,—for they supposed the rider and the horse, which they had never before seen, to be one and the same,[19]—were seized with a panic. Ordaz availed himself of it to command a general charge along the line, and the Indians, many of them throwing away their arms, fled without attempting further resistance.

Cortés was too content with the victory to care to follow it up by dipping his sword in the blood of the fugitives. He drew off his men to a copse of palms which skirted the place, and under their broad canopy the soldiers offered up thanksgivings to the Almighty for the victory vouchsafed them. The field of battle was made the site of a town, called, in honor of the day on which the action took place, *Santa María de la Victoria,* long afterwards the capital of the province.[20] The number of those who fought or fell in the engagement is altogether doubtful. Nothing, indeed, is more uncertain than numerical estimates of barbarians. And they gain nothing in probability when they come, as in the present instance, from the reports of their enemies. Most accounts, however, agree that the Indian force consisted of five squadrons of eight thousand men each. There is more discrepancy as to the number of slain,

[18] It was the order—as the reader may remember—given by Cæsar to his followers in his battle with Pompey:

"Adversosque jubet ferro confundere vultus."
LUCAN, Pharsalia, lib. 7, v. 575.

[19] "Equites," says Paolo Giovio, "unum integrum Centaurorum specie animal esse existimarent." Elogia Virorum Illustrium (Basil, 1696), lib. 6, p. 229.

[20] Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 11.

varying from one to thirty thousand! In this monstrous discordance the common disposition to exaggerate may lead us to look for truth in the neighborhood of the smallest number. The loss of the Christians was inconsiderable; not exceeding—if we receive their own reports, probably, from the same causes, much diminishing the truth—two killed and less than a hundred wounded! We may readily comprehend the feelings of the Conquerors, when they declared that "Heaven must have fought on their side, since their own strength could never have prevailed against such a multitude of enemies!" [21]

Several prisoners were taken in the battle, among them two chiefs. Cortés gave them their liberty, and sent a message by them to their countrymen "that he would overlook the past, if they would come in at once and tender their submission. Otherwise he would ride over the land, and put every living thing in it, man, woman, and child, to the sword!" With this formidable menace ringing in their ears, the envoys departed.

But the Tabascans had no relish for further hostilities. A body of inferior chiefs appeared the next day, clad in dark dresses of cotton, intimating

[21] "Crean Vras. Reales Altezas por cierto, que esta batalla fué vencida mas por voluntad de Dios que por nras. fuerzas, porque para con quarenta mil hombres de guerra, poca defensa fuera quatrozientos que nosotros eramos." (Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 20.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 35.) It is Las Casas who, regulating his mathematics, as usual, by his feelings, rates the Indian loss at the exorbitant amount cited in the text. "This," he concludes, dryly, "was the first preaching of the gospel by Cortés in New Spain!" Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 119.

their abject condition, and implored leave to bury their dead. It was granted by the general, with many assurances of his friendly disposition; but at the same time he told them he expected their principal caciques, as he would treat with none other. These soon presented themselves, attended by a numerous train of vassals, who followed with timid curiosity to the Christian camp. Among their propitiatory gifts were twenty female slaves, which, from the character of one of them, proved of infinitely more consequence than was anticipated by either Spaniards or Tabascans. Confidence was soon restored, and was succeeded by a friendly intercourse, and the interchange of Spanish toys for the rude commodities of the country, articles of food, cotton, and a few gold ornaments of little value. When asked where the precious metal was procured, they pointed to the west, and answered, "Culhua," "Mexico." The Spaniards saw this was no place for them to traffic, or to tarry in. Yet here, they were not many leagues distant from a potent and opulent city, or what once had been so, the ancient Palenque. But its glory may have even then passed away, and its name have been forgotten by the surrounding nations.

Before his departure the Spanish commander did not omit to provide for one great object of his expedition, the conversion of the Indians. He first represented to the caciques that he had been sent thither by a powerful monarch on the other side of the water, for whom he had now a right to claim their allegiance. He then caused the reverend fathers Olmedo and Diaz to enlighten their minds, as far as possible, in regard to the great

truths of revelation, urging them to receive these in place of their own heathenish abominations. The Tabascans, whose perceptions were no doubt materially quickened by the discipline they had undergone, made but a faint resistance to either proposal. The next day was Palm Sunday, and the general resolved to celebrate their conversion by one of those pompous ceremonials of the Church, which should make a lasting impression on their minds.

A solemn procession was formed of the whole army, with the ecclesiastics at their head, each soldier bearing a palm-branch in his hand. The concourse was swelled by thousands of Indians of both sexes, who followed in curious astonishment at the spectacle. The long files bent their way through the flowery savannas that bordered the settlement, to the principal temple, where an altar was raised, and the image of the presiding deity was deposed to make room for that of the Virgin with the infant Saviour. Mass was celebrated by Father Olmedo, and the soldiers who were capable joined in the solemn chant. The natives listened in profound silence, and, if we may believe the chronicler of the event who witnessed it, were melted into tears; while their hearts were penetrated with reverential awe for the God of those terrible beings who seemed to wield in their own hands the thunder and the lightning.[22]

The Roman Catholic communion has, it must be admitted, some decided advantages over the Prot-

[22] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 21, 22.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Martyr, De Insulis, p. 351.—Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., ubi supra.

estant, for the purposes of proselytism. The dazzling pomp of its service and its touching appeal to the sensibilities affect the imagination of the rude child of nature much more powerfully than the cold abstractions of Protestantism, which, addressed to the reason, demand a degree of refinement and mental culture in the audience to comprehend them. The respect, moreover, shown by the Catholic for the material representations of Divinity, greatly facilitates the same object. It is true, such representations are used by him only as incentives, not as the objects of worship. But this distinction is lost on the savage, who finds such forms of adoration too analogous to his own to impose any great violence on his feelings. It is only required of him to transfer his homage from the image of Quetzalcoatl, the benevolent deity who walked among men, to that of the Virgin or the Redeemer; from the Cross, which he has worshipped as the emblem of the god of rain, to the same Cross, the symbol of salvation.

These solemnities concluded, Cortés prepared to return to his ships, well satisfied with the impression made on the new converts, and with the conquests he had thus achieved for Castile and Christianity. The soldiers, taking leave of their Indian friends, entered the boats with the palm-branches in their hands, and, descending the river, re-embarked on board their vessels, which rode at anchor at its mouth. A favorable breeze was blowing, and the little navy, opening its sails to receive it, was soon on its way again to the golden shores of Mexico.

CHAPTER V

VOYAGE ALONG THE COAST—DOÑA MARINA—SPANIARDS LAND IN MEXICO—INTERVIEW WITH THE AZTECS

1519

THE fleet held its course so near the shore that the inhabitants could be seen on it; and, as it swept along the winding borders of the Gulf, the soldiers, who had been on the former expedition with Grijalva, pointed out to their companions the memorable places on the coast. Here was the *Rio de Alvarado,* named after the gallant adventurer, who was present also in this expedition; there the *Rio de Vanderas,* in which Grijalva had carried on so lucrative a commerce with the Mexicans; and there the *Isla de los Sacrificios,* where the Spaniards first saw the vestiges of human sacrifice on the coast. Puertocarrero, as he listened to these reminiscences of the sailors, repeated the words of the old ballad of Montesinos, "Here is France, there is Paris, and there the waters of the Duero," [1] etc. "But I advise you," he added,

[1] "Cata Francia, Montesinos,
Cata Paris la ciudad,
Cata las aguas de Duero
Do van á dar en la mar."

They are the words of the popular old ballad, first published, I believe, in the Romancero de Ambéres, and lately by Duran, Romances caballerescos é históricos, Parte 1, p. 82.

turning to Cortés, "to look out only for the rich lands, and the best way to govern them." "Fear not," replied his commander: "if Fortune but favors me as she did Orlando, and I have such gallant gentlemen as you for my companions, I shall understand myself very well." [2]

The fleet had now arrived off San Juan de Ulua, the island so named by Grijalva. The weather was temperate and serene, and crowds of natives were gathered on the shore of the main land, gazing at the strange phenomenon, as the vessels glided along under easy sail on the smooth bosom of the waters. It was the evening of Thursday in Passion Week. The air came pleasantly off the shore, and Cortés, liking the spot, thought he might safely anchor under the lee of the island, which would shelter him from the *nortes* that sweep over these seas with fatal violence in the winter, sometimes even late in the spring.

The ships had not been long at anchor, when a light pirogue, filled with natives, shot off from the neighboring continent, and steered for the general's vessel, distinguished by the royal ensign of Castile floating from the mast. The Indians came on board with a frank confidence, inspired by the accounts of the Spaniards spread by their countrymen who had traded with Grijalva. They brought presents of fruits and flowers and little ornaments of gold, which they gladly exchanged for the usual trinkets. Cortés was baffled in his attempts to hold a conversation with his visitors by means of the interpreter, Aguilar, who was ignorant of the lan-

[2] Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 37.

guage; the Mayan dialects, with which he was conversant, bearing too little resemblance to the Aztec. The natives supplied the deficiency, as far as possible, by the uncommon vivacity and significance of their gestures,—the hieroglyphics of speech; but the Spanish commander saw with chagrin the embarrassments he must encounter in future for want of a more perfect medium of communication.[3] In this dilemma, he was informed that one of the female slaves given to him by the Tabascan chiefs was a native Mexican, and understood the language. Her name—that given to her by the Spaniards—was Marina; and, as she was to exercise a most important influence on their fortunes, it is necessary to acquaint the reader with something of her character and history.

She was born at Painalla, in the province of Coatzacualco, on the southeastern borders of the Mexican empire. Her father, a rich and powerful cacique, died when she was very young. Her mother married again, and, having a son, she conceived the infamous idea of securing to this offspring of her second union Marina's rightful inheritance. She accordingly feigned that the latter was dead, but secretly delivered her into the hands of some itinerant traders of Xicallanco. She availed herself, at the same time, of the death of a child of one of her slaves, to substitute the

[3] Las Casas notices the significance of the Indian gestures as implying a most active imagination: "Señas é meneos con que los Yndios mucho mas que otras generaciones entienden y se dan á entender, por tener muy bivos los sentidos exteriores y tambien los interiores, mayormente que es admirable su imaginacion." Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.

corpse for that of her own daughter, and celebrated the obsequies with mock solemnity. These particulars are related by the honest old soldier Bernal Diaz, who knew the mother, and witnessed the generous treatment of her afterwards by Marina. By the merchants the Indian maiden was again sold to the cacique of Tabasco, who delivered her, as we have seen, to the Spaniards.

From the place of her birth, she was well acquainted with the Mexican tongue, which, indeed, she is said to have spoken with great elegance. Her residence in Tabasco familiarized her with the dialects of that country, so that she could carry on a conversation with Aguilar, which he in turn rendered into the Castilian. Thus a certain though somewhat circuitous channel was opened to Cortés for communicating with the Aztecs; a circumstance of the last importance to the success of his enterprise. It was not very long, however, before Marina, who had a lively genius, made herself so far mistress of the Castilian as to supersede the necessity of any other linguist. She learned it the more readily, as it was to her the language of love.

Cortés, who appreciated the value of her services from the first, made her his interpreter, then his secretary, and, won by her charms, his mistress. She had a son by him, Don Martin Cortés, *comendador* of the Military Order of St. James, less distinguished by his birth than his unmerited persecutions.

Marina was at this time in the morning of life. She is said to have possessed uncommon personal

attractions,[4] and her open, expressive features indicated her generous temper. She always remained faithful to the countrymen of her adoption; and her knowledge of the language and customs of the Mexicans, and often of their designs, enabled her to extricate the Spaniards, more than once, from the most embarrassing and perilous situations. She had her errors, as we have seen. But they should be rather charged to the defects of early education, and to the evil influence of him to whom in the darkness of her spirit she looked with simple confidence for the light to guide her. All agree that she was full of excellent qualities, and the important services which she rendered the Spaniards have made her memory deservedly dear to them; while the name of Malinche[5]—the name by which she is still known in Mexico—was pronounced with kindness by the conquered races,

[4] "Hermosa como Diosa," *beautiful as a goddess,* says Camargo of her. (Hist. de Tlascala, MS.) A modern poet pays her charms the following not inelegant tribute:

"Admira tan lúcida cabalgada
Y espectáculo tal Doña Marina,
India noble al caudillo presentada,
De fortuna y belleza peregrina.
* * * * * *
Con despejado espíritu y viveza
Gira la vista en el concurso mudo;
Rico manto de extrema sutileza
Con chapas de oro autorizarla pudo,
Prendido con bizarra gentileza
Sobre los pechos en ayroso nudo;
Reyna parece de la Indiana Zona,
Varonil y hermosísima Amazona."

MORATIN, Las Naves de Cortés destruidas.

[5] ["Malinche" is a corruption of the Aztec word "Malintzin," which is itself a corruption of the Spanish name "Marina." The Aztecs, having no *r* in their alphabet, substituted *l* for it, while the termination *tzin* was added in token of respect, so that the name was equivalent to Doña or Lady Marina. Conquista de Méjico (trad. de Vega, anotada por D. Lúcas Alaman), tom. ii. pp. 17, 269.]

with whose misfortunes she showed an invariable sympathy.[6]

With the aid of his two intelligent interpreters, Cortés entered into conversation with his Indian visitors. He learned that they were Mexicans, or rather subjects of the great Mexican empire, of which their own province formed one of the comparatively recent conquests. The country was ruled by a powerful monarch, called Moctheuzoma, or by Europeans more commonly Montezuma,[7] who dwelt on the mountain plains of the interior, nearly seventy leagues from the coast; their own province was governed by one of his nobles, named Teuhtlile, whose residence was eight leagues distant. Cortés acquainted them in turn with his own friendly views in visiting their country, and with his desire of an interview with the Aztec governor. He then dismissed them loaded with presents, having first ascertained that there was abundance of gold in the interior, like the specimens they had brought.

[6] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 120.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 25, 26.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. pp. 12–14.—Oviedo, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 33, cap. 1.—Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Camargo, Hist. de Tlascala, MS.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 37, 38.—There is some discordance in the notices of the early life of Marina. I have followed Bernal Diaz,—from his means of observation, the best authority. There is happily no difference in the estimate of her singular merits and services.

[7] The name of the Aztec monarch, like those of most persons and places in New Spain, has been twisted into all possible varieties of orthography. Cortés, in his letters, calls him "Muteczuma." Modern Spanish historians usually spell his name "Motezuma." I have preferred to conform to the name by which he is usually known to English readers. It is the one adopted by Bernal Diaz, and by most writers near the time of the Conquest. Alaman, Disertaciones históricas, tom. i., apénd. 2.

Cortés, pleased with the manners of the people and the goodly reports of the land, resolved to take up his quarters here for the present. The next morning, April twenty-first, being Good Friday, he landed, with all his force, on the very spot where now stands the modern city of Vera Cruz. Little did the Conqueror imagine that the desolate beach on which he first planted his foot was one day to be covered by a flourishing city, the great mart of European and Oriental trade, the commercial capital of New Spain.[8]

It was a wide and level plain, except where the sand had been drifted into hillocks by the perpetual blowing of the *norte*. On these sand-hills he mounted his little battery of guns, so as to give him the command of the country. He then employed the troops in cutting down small trees and bushes which grew near, in order to provide a shelter from the weather. In this he was aided by the people of the country, sent, as it appeared, by the governor of the district to assist the Spaniards. With their help stakes were firmly set in the earth, and covered with boughs, and with mats and cotton carpets, which the friendly natives brought with them. In this way they secured, in a couple of days, a good defence against the scorching rays of the sun, which beat with intolerable fierceness on the sands. The place was surrounded by stag-

[8] Ixtlilxochitl, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Clavigero, Stor. del Messico, tom. iii. p. 16.—New Vera Cruz, as the present town is called, is distinct, as we shall see hereafter, from that established by Cortés, and was not founded till the close of the sixteenth century, by the Conde de Monterey, Viceroy of Mexico. It received its privileges as a city from Philip III. in 1615. Ibid., tom. iii. p. 30, nota.

nant marshes, the exhalations from which, quickened by the heat into the pestilent malaria, have occasioned in later times wider mortality to Europeans than all the hurricanes on the coast. The bilious disorders, now the terrible scourge of the *tierra caliente,* were little known before the Conquest. The seeds of the poison seem to have been scattered by the hand of civilization; for it is only necessary to settle a town, and draw together a busy European population, in order to call out the malignity of the venom which had before lurked innoxious in the atmosphere.[9]

While these arrangements were in progress, the natives flocked in from the adjacent district, which was tolerably populous in the interior, drawn by a natural curiosity to see the wonderful strangers. They brought with them fruits, vegetables, flowers in abundance, game, and many dishes cooked after the fashion of the country, with little articles of gold and other ornaments. They gave away some as presents, and bartered others for the wares of the Spaniards; so that the camp, crowded with a motley throng of every age and sex, wore the ap-

[9] The epidemic of the *matlazahuatl,* so fatal to the Aztecs, is shown by M. de Humboldt to have been essentially different from the *vómito,* or bilious fever of our day. Indeed, this disease is not noticed by the early conquerors and colonists, and, Clavigero asserts, was not known in Mexico till 1725. (Stor. del Messico, tom. i. p. 117, nota.) Humboldt, however, arguing that the same physical causes must have produced similar results, carries the disease back to a much higher antiquity, of which he discerns some traditional and historic vestiges. "Il ne faut pas confondre l'époque," he remarks, with his usual penetration, "à laquelle une maladie a été décrite pour la première fois, parce qu'elle a fait de grands ravages dans un court espace de temps, avec l'époque de sa première apparition." Essai politique, tom. iv. p. 161 et seq., and 179.

pearance of a fair. From some of the visitors Cortés learned the intention of the governor to wait on him the following day.

This was Easter. Teuhtlile arrived, as he had announced, before noon. He was attended by a numerous train, and was met by Cortés, who conducted him with much ceremony to his tent, where his principal officers were assembled. The Aztec chief returned their salutations with polite though formal courtesy. Mass was first said by Father Olmedo, and the service was listened to by Teuhtlile and his attendants with decent reverence. A collation was afterwards served, at which the general entertained his guest with Spanish wines and confections. The interpreters were then introduced, and a conversation commenced between the parties.

The first inquiries of Teuhtlile were respecting the country of the strangers and the purport of their visit. Cortés told him that "he was the subject of a potent monarch beyond the seas, who ruled over an immense empire, and had kings and princes for his vassals; that, acquainted with the greatness of the Mexican emperor, his master had desired to enter into a communication with him, and had sent him as his envoy to wait on Montezuma with a present in token of his good will, and a message which he must deliver in person." He concluded by inquiring of Teuhtlile when he could be admitted to his sovereign's presence.

To this the Aztec noble somewhat haughtily replied, "How is it that you have been here only two days, and demand to see the emperor?" He

then added, with more courtesy, that "he was surprised to learn there was another monarch as powerful as Montezuma, but that, if it were so, he had no doubt his master would be happy to communicate with him. He would send his couriers with the royal gift brought by the Spanish commander, and, so soon as he had learned Montezuma's will, would communicate it."

Teuhtlile then commanded his slaves to bring forward the present intended for the Spanish general. It consisted of ten loads of fine cottons, several mantles of that curious feather-work whose rich and delicate dyes might vie with the most beautiful painting, and a wicker basket filled with ornaments of wrought gold, all calculated to inspire the Spaniards with high ideas of the wealth and mechanical ingenuity of the Mexicans.

Cortés received these presents with suitable acknowledgments, and ordered his own attendants to lay before the chief the articles designed for Montezuma. These were an arm-chair richly carved and painted, a crimson cap of cloth, having a gold medal emblazoned with St. George and the dragon, and a quantity of collars, bracelets, and other ornaments of cut glass, which, in a country where glass was not to be had, might claim to have the value of real gems, and no doubt passed for such with the inexperienced Mexican. Teuhtlile observed a soldier in the camp with a shining gilt helmet on his head, which he said reminded him of one worn by the god Quetzalcoatl in Mexico; and he showed a desire that Montezuma should see it. The coming of the Spaniards,

as the reader will soon see, was associated with some traditions of this same deity. Cortés expressed his willingness that the casque should be sent to the emperor, intimating a hope that it would be returned filled with the gold dust of the country, that he might be able to compare its quality with that in his own! He further told the governor, as we are informed by his chaplain, "that the Spaniards were troubled with a disease of the heart, for which gold was a specific remedy"![10] "In short," says Las Casas, "he contrived to make his want of gold very clear to the governor."[11]

While these things were passing, Cortés observed one of Teuhtlile's attendants busy with a pencil, apparently delineating some object. On looking at his work, he found that it was a sketch on canvas of the Spaniards, their costumes, arms, and, in short, different objects of interest, giving to each its appropriate form and color. This was the celebrated picture-writing of the Aztecs, and, as Teuhtlile informed him, this man was employed in portraying the various objects for the eye of Montezuma, who would thus gather a more vivid notion of their appearance than from any description by words. Cortés was pleased with the idea; and, as he knew how much the effect would be heightened by converting still life into action, he ordered out the cavalry on the beach, the wet sands of which afforded a firm footing for the horses. The bold and rapid movements of

[10] Gomara, Crónica, cap. 26.
[11] Las Casas, Hist. de las Indias, MS., lib. 3, cap. 119.

the troops, as they went through their military exercises; the apparent ease with which they managed the fiery animals on which they were mounted; the glancing of their weapons, and the shrill cry of the trumpet, all filled the spectators with astonishment; but when they heard the thunders of the cannon, which Cortés ordered to be fired at the same time, and witnessed the volumes of smoke and flame issuing from these terrible engines, and the rushing sound of the balls, as they dashed through the trees of the neighboring forest, shivering their branches into fragments, they were filled with consternation, from which the Aztec chief himself was not wholly free.

Nothing of all this was lost on the painters, who faithfully recorded, after their fashion, every particular; not omitting the ships,—"the water-houses," as they called them, of the strangers,—which, with their dark hulls and snow-white sails reflected from the water, were swinging lazily at anchor on the calm bosom of the bay. All was depicted with a fidelity that excited in their turn the admiration of the Spaniards, who, doubtless, unprepared for this exhibition of skill, greatly overestimated the merits of the execution.*

These various matters completed, Teuhtlile with his attendants withdrew from the Spanish

* [According to a curious document published by Icazbalceta (Col. de Doc. para la Hist. de México, tom. ii.), two of the principal caciques present on this occasion communicated secretly with Cortés, and, declaring themselves disaffected subjects of Montezuma, offered to facilitate the advance of the Spaniards by furnishing the general with paintings in which the various features of the country would be correctly delineated. The offer was accepted, and on the next visit the paintings were produced, and proved subse-

quarters, with the same ceremony with which he had entered them; leaving orders that his people should supply the troops with provisions and other articles requisite for their accommodation, till further instructions from the capital.[12]

[12] Ixtlilxochitl, Relaciones, MS., No. 13.—Idem, Hist. Chich., MS., cap. 79.—Gomara, Crónica, cap. 25, 26.—Bernal Diaz, Hist. de la Conquista, cap. 38.—Herrera, Hist. general, dec. 2, lib. 5, cap. 4.—Carta de Vera Cruz, MS.—Torquemada, Monarch. Ind., lib. 4, cap. 13–15.—Tezozomoc, Crón. Mexicana, MS., cap. 107.

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quently of great service to Cortés, who rewarded the donors with certain grants. But the genuineness of this paper, though supported by so distinguished a scholar as Señor Ramirez, is more than questionable.—K.]

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